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Rania Alwani portrait of the week by Bahgory 8



Graft probe

PALESTINIAN lawmakers yesterday asked that an emergency session of parliament be held next Sunday or Monday for an unprecedented vote of no confidence in the self-rule cabinet. The call came after a parliamentary report implicated the entire cabinet, with the exception of four ministers, in corruption and the mismanagement of $326 million in 1996.

Hatem Abdel-Qader, one of the authors of the scathing report, told AFP news agency that the vote would either be against the entire cabinet or against the three ministers named in the report. Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's adviser, Nabil Abu Rdainah, said Arafat would take "all the necessary measures to guarantee smooth performance in the Palestinian Authority" but refused to comment on the report's main recommendation — to put the three ministers on trial for corruption.

As the implicated ministers defended themselves during a debate of the report in parliament yesterday, one of them, International Cooperation Minister Nabil Shaath, accused the report's authors of hiding personal ambitions and said he would file a slander suit against them. He characterised the report as a political crime based on rumours. Jamil Al-Tarifi, civil affairs minister, said he would present documents to clear his name.

(see p4)

Legal murder

THE ISRAELI parliament yesterday approved draft legislation which practically rules out compensation for Palestinians who suffered losses during the Intifada against Israeli occupation.

The bill, approved by a vote of 55 to 49 defines action taken by the Israeli army as "combat activity", which would legally exonerate the military from having to pay compensation to victims.

Under pressure from human rights' groups, the government made cosmetic changes, AFP reported, by deciding that requests for compensation should be handled by the courts, not commissions.

During the uprising more than 1,000 Palestinians were killed and tens of thousands were wounded by Israeli troops.

Ban lifted

THE US yesterday lifted a 10-year ban on travel to Lebanon by US citizens after receiving pledges by the Lebanese government that it would do more to fight terrorism. But Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said that Lebanon remained a dangerous place and she warned Americans not to travel there for security reasons.

Reuter quoted US officials as claiming that the decision was based on a legal interpretation of US law and not on political factors, such as the Middle East peace process.

A representative of the Lebanese government will travel to Washington within the next 24 to 48 hours to discuss closer working relationship between the two governments.

INSIDE

Blasts rock Jerusalem

The future of the peace process was thrown in jeopardy after two bombs killed 13 people in Jerusalem

Two sucide bombers blew themselves up in a crowded outdoor vegetable market in Jerusalem yesterday, killing 11 people and wounding more than 100, police said.

The bombings, for which there was no immediate claim of responsibility, led to the postponement of a new initiative by US envoy Dennis Ross to try and break the impasse between Palestinian and Israeli negotiators. Ross had been scheduled to start talks in the region yesterday. Israeli officials said no new date for his trip had been set.

The officials said the Ross initiative may go ahead, but indicated the chances of major progress had dimmed as a result of the bloodshed.

Palestinian officials condemned the attack, and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat telephoned Netanyahu to express his condolences.

"The prime minister said to him, in a very tough conversation, that it is not enough to express sorrow, and that he demands that Arafat take action against the terrorist organisations and their infrastructure," Netanyahu spokesman Shai Bazak said.



Paramedics tend to the injured outside the West Jerusalem market where two bomb blasts killed 13 and injured over 100 people *(photo: Reuter)*

Netanyahu told a news conference after visiting the wounded in hospital that "we expect the Palestinian Authority and its leader to begin to fight terror as they are committed to, as they haven't done until today, that they will take all the steps required against these terrorists and their operators who roam free."

Netanyahu added: "They must be jailed, their weapons and their explosives collected. We aren't ready to accept that murderous acts will be part of our daily lives every few weeks and months and we will await suitable steps."

David Bar-Illan, a top aide to Netanyahu, said the government "did not consider terrorist strikes against its citizens compatible with the peace process. It cannot continue with negotiations as long as such strikes take place, and the Palestinian Authority does nothing to stop them."

Arafat, in a telephone conversation with President Hosni Mubarak, said "this operation was a direct attack by the enemies of peace."

The blasts tore through a lane in the Mahane Yehuda marketplace, the city's main fruit and vegetable market at about 1.15 pm, when the market was packed with shoppers.

Police initially said 18 people were killed, but later revised the number down to 13, including the two suicide bombers whose dismembered bodies were found at the scene. More than 100 people were injured.

Green awnings covering the alley were torn apart and vegetable stands and clothing displays overturned, their wares shredded and strewn about the asphalt. Scraps of clothing hung from telephone lines.

Smashed vegetables and watermelons covered the ground, mixed with blood. Bodies covered in soot and blood lay on stretchers and on the ground before being hurried away by rescue workers.

Israel Radio said the two bombers apparently drove to the market together disguised in black coats with white shirts and ties — perhaps in an effort to look like ultra-orthodox Jews. Each carried a briefcase packed with 10 kilograms of explosives.

Bomb squads at the scene picked up blackened nails, packed into the bombs to increase their deadly impact.

Gabi Last, deputy national police chief, said the two blasts went off about 50 to 60 metres apart. He said there had been no intelligence warnings of terror attacks in recent days.

"It was boom, boom, two seconds between explosions," said witness Nissim Armoza, who was buying a sandwich in the market when the blast went off.

Israel immediately imposed a closure on the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Dozens of Israelis gathered near the site of the attack, shouting "What kind of peace is this? Who needs this peace."

Nabil Shaath, chief Palestinian negotiator, said the bombings were a "criminal act" by opponents of Israeli-Palestinian talks and came just as "there was a chance to revive the peace process."

Mahmoud Abbas, Arafat's top deputy, condemned the attack and called it a "crime against the peace process."

It was the first bombing since the 21 March attack on a Tel Aviv cafe in which three Israeli women and the suicide bomber were killed, and the most serious attack since the February-March 1996 wave of bombings carried out by the military Islamist group Hamas.

President Bill Clinton called the bombing a barbaric act and said it was essential the Palestinians tighten security to prevent such attacks.

Clinton said he had spoken with Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu to express his condolences and said a visit to the region by US envoy Dennis Ross was being postponed to allow a period of mourning in Israel.

"Today's [yesterday's] bombing by terrorists in Jerusalem is a barbarous act. There is no excuse and there must be no tolerance for this kind of inhumanity," Clinton told reporters at the White House.

"The slaughter was aimed directly at innocent Israelis and, make no mistake, it was also aimed at the majority of Israelis, Palestinians and Arabs who want a lasting and just peace," he said.

"The only answer can and must be concrete steps by the Palestinian Authority to increase security operations and the strengthening of security cooperation between Palestinians and Israelis," he continued.

Ross had been due to leave yesterday to meet both Netanyahu and Yasser Arafat after Israelis and Arabs had shown signs of increased willingness to revive the stalled peace talks.

Asked what security measures could have prevented the attack, Clinton said he did not know but noted there had been long periods of successful security operations and reiterated his call for cracking down on such attacks. He also urged a "deepened determination by both Palestinians and Israelis to pursue peace."

"Only when a lasting and secure peace is achieved will the enemies of peace be defeated," said Clinton, adding that his personal involvement in the region remained "continuing and intense."

In Cairo, Foreign Minister Amr Moussa expressed sorrow and extended condolences for the families of victims, reports **Dina Ezzat**. He called upon both Palestinians and Israelis to exercise self-restraint in order to achieve a just peace which would ensure the security of both sides.

"This kind of attack does not serve the cause of peace," Moussa said, adding that "all sorts of acts that don't serve the cause of peace lead to much suffering for both Palestinians and Israelis."

Moussa affirmed that "what counts now is to underline the need for the continuity of the peace process. Therefore," he said, "we call upon both sides to exercise self-restraint. All the forces of peace, particularly in Israel, should continue their support for a just peace because this is the only guarantee for the security of everybody. We are interested in [the kind of] peace that would enhance the security of both peoples: the Israelis and Palestinians."

Copts reject US meddling

Copts, speaking to **Omayma Abdel-Latif**, reacted with indignation to a draft law now before the US Congress, which lists Egypt among countries pursuing anti-Christian policies

A draft law currently before the US Congress, which describes as "heinous" the conditions under which Copts live in Egypt, drew an angry reaction from Coptic figures interviewed by *Al-Ahram Weekly*. The law, which may be passed next autumn, recommends a boycott of all companies which deal with countries whose governments allegedly pursue anti-Christian policies.

A spokesman for Pope Shenoudah III, head of the Coptic Orthodox Church, told the *Weekly*: "Whatever problems the Copts of Egypt are suffering from will be solved within a domestic framework and through purely Egyptian channels."

Another source from the Coptic church added: "We don't need anybody to claim they are defending the rights of Copts. The US administration is better off devoting attention to the abuse of human rights in the Israeli-occupied territories. The US should stop acting as a global cop, a global bully."

Pope Shenoudah, in public statements, has repeatedly objected to any interference in Egyptian affairs.

"The US should never call us an Egyptian minority because we are part and parcel of the national fabric," a Coptic church source said.

"The draft law before Congress sounds like an old colonial pretext to interfere in Egypt's internal affairs, but the question that should be raised is whether the US administration has been able to protect its own black citizens from widespread persecution," the source added.

A 30-page report entitled "Religious Persecution", compiled by Senator Joe Lieberman of the Subcommittee on Middle East Affairs, claims that Christians are the target of persecution in Egypt, Sudan and Saudi Arabia and that Bahais are persecuted in Iran. "We, Americans, cannot help but be repulsed by the kind of savagery that turns faith into a death sentence," the report says. "We have a unique obligation to speak out and to act against religious persecution wherever we find it."

Lieberman called for action. The response was to put forward the draft law, which would impose a boycott on companies which deal with countries where harassment, intimidation and anti-Christian policies have become "daily occurrences."

"The persecution of Christians and others who refuse to convert to a fanatical brand of Islam is on the increase in these countries," the report said. "While much of the evidence is anecdotal — these governments are not anxious to catalogue and share this damning information — it is nonetheless compelling."

Some analysts believe the draft law was the fruit of active lobbying by Coptic expatriates in the United States and Canada. But others blamed some local human rights groups for providing misleading information about the Copts' conditions.

Maurice Sadek heads the National Unity Human Rights Centre, which recently issued a report documenting cases of Copts facing persecution. Speaking to the *Weekly*, Sadek denied that his centre had in any way presented a distorted picture of the Copts' situation. He equally rejected any attempt by the Congress or other foreign institutions to interfere in Coptic affairs.

"We, as Copts, do not accept any pressure on the Egyptian government under the pretext of defending Coptic rights," Sadek said. He believes that any problems faced by Copts should be addressed within a national framework.

"We should shut the door in the face of all those who want to play the Coptic card, but this can only be done by addressing the Copts' problems," Sadek said. He suggested a new civil rights law for Copts and the allocation of 40 electoral constituencies for Coptic MPs.

Nabil Abdel-Fattah of the Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies said the threat to link US aid to the observance of human, including Coptic, rights, "has to do more with political balances than with a sincere concern for the Copts' problems."

Abdel-Fattah accused the report of containing "the seeds of racism, because it chooses to tackle persecution of Christians alone while many people in different parts of the world suffer because of their beliefs." Abdel-Fattah, who is also the chief editor of the Ahram Centre's *State of Religion in Egypt Report*, is to take part in a conference on Christian minorities in the Middle East that will be held in Jordan next autumn.

Government officials chose to play down the importance of the report, and refrained from comment. But one official, who asked that his name be withheld, said the US law would be "impractical to implement."

Amir Salem, who heads the Human Rights Legal Resource Centre, doubted that the draft law was motivated by a sincere concern for the condition of the Copts. "This is one of the many cards used against Egypt every now and then, but we all know for a fact that the US couldn't care less about the Copts," Salem said.

Salem believes that there there is some discrimination against Copts, but that poverty is an equally divisive force. "Any poor citizen who lives in a slum area and cannot afford a decent living is the victim of persecution, be he a Copt or a Muslim," Salem said.

Marlyn Tadros, a human rights activist, summed up the question of discrimination in these words: "Copts overplay it, while Muslims underplay it."

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Nehru prize for Mubarak

What is the significance of President Mubarak being awarded a prestigious Indian prize? asks Gamal Nkrumah

Last week, the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding was awarded to President Hosni Mubarak. The award is made by a jury appointed by the Indian Government and administered by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations.

Officials from both countries believe the award could boost the long tradition of friendship between Egypt and India — the world's largest democracy — and increase bilateral trade.

"There has been a hiatus since the days when the late Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel-Nasser and Nehru took political relations between the two countries to new heights. We hope that this award will break the ice, and that we shall have a regeneration of relations that will be as solid and sentimental as they were during the Nasser and Nehru days," Ambassador Kanwal Sibal of India told *Al-Ahram Weekly* in Cairo.

In New Delhi, Egypt's ambassador to India, Gillane Allam, told the *Weekly* in a telephone interview that "the award is normally presented to the recipient on 14 November, Nehru's birthday. We hope that President Mubarak will visit us in India. His visit would be a great boost to Indo-Egyptian relations."

Allam stressed that there is room for improvements in economic ties between the two countries. "There are joint ventures, initiated by Indian firms, that are worth $330 million to Egypt. But, Egyptian entrepreneurs' ignorance of the Indian market and the potential of doing business in India play a significant role in hindering the expansion of trade between Egypt and India," Allam said.

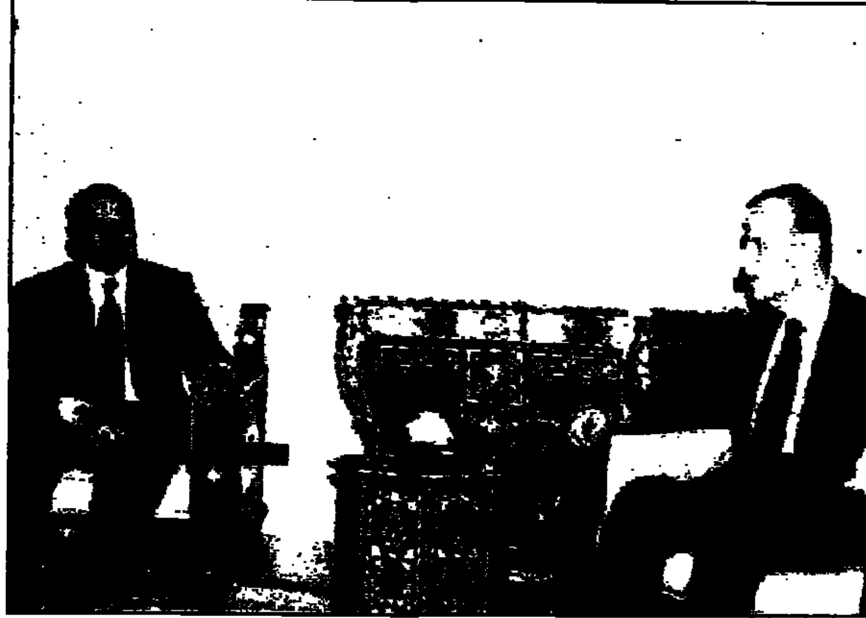
"India appreciates that Egypt's commitment to regional dialogue and peace has been the bedrock on which efforts to structure peace in the Middle East have been based," she added, explaining why Mubarak had been awarded the prize.

Allam said that the Egyptian president was also chosen for launching the "visionary New Valley Project which, by irrigating and developing vast tracts of Egypt's Western Desert, could constitute a monumental achievement for the welfare of the future generations."

Among the previous recipients of the award are African-American civil rights activist Martin Luther King Jr (1966), Mother Theresa (1969), former Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda (1970), former Yugoslav leader Josip Broz Tito (1971), former Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere (1973), South Africa's Nelson Mandela (1979), former Senegalese President Leopold Sedar Senghor (1982), former Swedish premier Olaf Palme (1986) and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat (1988).

President Mubarak visited Syria and Jordan Tuesday for consultations on the stalled peace effort, reports **Nevine Khalil**







Mubarak, on his previously unannounced visit to Syria and Jordan, met with Assad (left) and Hussein on Tuesday

Mubarak warns of an 'explosion'

President Hosni Mubarak paid quick visits to Damascus and Amman on Tuesday to coordinate the Arab position in the stalled peace process with President Hafez Al-Assad and King Hussein.

On the way back, Mubarak warned of an "explosion" if Israel went ahead with the construction of a Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem. Mubarak told reporters aboard the presidential plane that he had made the warning in letters to Netanyahu and President Bill Clinton.

At a joint news conference in Damascus with Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad, Mubarak said that "it is very clear how dangerous it is to continue building settlements on Palestinian land."

Assad, sounding even more pessimistic, said: "It is difficult for me to say there is hope in light of the current situation... I don't think there is anyone who knows what is happening and could say there is hope... Everyday we get a new proof that there is no hope."

Netanyahu has backtracked on earlier Israeli offers of a partial withdrawal from the Golan Heights, captured from Syria in 1967. During a visit to the Golan earlier this month, the Israeli prime minister pledged that the future of the plateau lay with the Jewish state.

The Israeli Knesset gave preliminary approval last week to a law that would make any withdrawal from the Golan conditional on the approval of a two-thirds majority. Mubarak described the law as "provocative and a threat to the peace process."

Mubarak, on his way back to Cairo from Damascus, stopped at Amman airport for talks with King Hussein. "The meeting was an opportunity to discuss matters relating to the peace process, the region and bilateral ties," the monarch told reporters after Mubarak's departure.

"We continue to demand a just, permanent and honourable solution to the central cause in this part of the world and naturally we support our Palestinian brothers to the utmost of our capabilities," Hussein said.

He praised active Egyptian diplomacy, describing Jordan's role as a supportive one. "We have been working closely together. Egypt has played a very major role which only Egypt can play and our position has been a complementary one to Egypt in all that has happened so far," said King Hussein.

Hussein also briefed Mubarak on talks he held earlier in Amman with Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy, Jordanian officials said.

Diplomatic sources in Cairo told Dina Ezzat that Mubarak, Assad and Hussein reached a preliminary consensus that in light of the overall situation in the region, taking part in the Middle East-North Africa economic summit, scheduled for November in Qatar, might not be the best idea.

Foreign Minister Amr Moussa, asked if Mubarak's trip would lead to a mini-Arab summit attended by the three leaders as well as King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, responded: "Let us not jump to conclusions, but high-level consultations will continue."

Egypt and France discuss military cooperation

PRESIDENT Hosni Mubarak met with French Defence Minister Alain Richard in Alexandria on Saturday to discuss bilateral military cooperation and Middle East peace-making. The talks covered the "strong ties" between Egypt and France in various fields, as well as ways of breaking the deadlock in the peace process. Richard praised Mubarak's efforts in this connection, affirming that Cairo has the full backing of France.

Richard had arrived in Cairo last Friday for a two-day visit as part of a tour which later took him to Saudi Arabia and a number of African countries.

Defence Minister Field Marshal Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, who attended Saturday's meeting, said the talks dealt with military cooperation between the two countries, adding that a joint military committee will be established to promote this cooperation further, as well as an exchange of techniques in the fields of training, armament and military production. Tantawi said that Mubarak's close relations with the late French President François Mitterrand and his successor, Jacques Chirac, allow for strong Franco-Egyptian military cooperation.

Richard told a news conference in Cairo that he discussed several contracts with Egyptian military officials, some of which were finalised, but declined to provide details. He did announce, however, that French troops will, for the second year in a row, participate in Egypt's 'Bright Star' war games with the United States in November.

Richard said France was greatly concerned with reactivating the peace process, and that along with the EU it has tried to find an "appropriate formula" to break the deadlock.

Putting thugs out of business

The government is preparing a new bill to cope with the mushrooming phenomenon of street thuggery. **Gamal Essam El-Din** investigates

Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri decided this week to set up a special ministerial committee to draft a new bill aimed at stiffening penalties for crimes of thuggery. The committee, which includes the ministers of justice, parliamentary affairs, cabinet affairs and administrative development, was formed after two business partners, locked in a bitter dispute over trademarks, enlisted the aid of rival groups of hired thugs. In an ensuing fight, one man was killed and six citizens and 12 policemen were badly injured. Thirteen thugs were arrested.

The new bill, according to an informed cabinet source, will revise the Weapons and Ammunition Law to provide harsher penalties for the acquisition and use of knives, daggers, swords and chains — the thugs' favourite weapons. The penalties under the new law are expected to rise to between 15 and 20 years imprisonment from 3 to 15 years at present. Cabinet sources also said the government will firmly apply the "emergency law" — which gives police sweeping powers to detain suspects without trial — against the street ruffians until the new law is passed by the People's Assembly.

The business dispute between the two principal partners in Americana Promotion and Advertising Agency (APAA) turned two weeks ago into a deadly confrontation when they hired two rival groups of thugs to take over the offices of the leading advertising firm in Giza. The simmering quarrel exploded when 51 per cent of APAA's shareholders, led by the Kuwaiti-based El-Kharafi Group, decided that they could no longer deal with Tarek Nour, APAA's board chairman and the advertising guru who holds 49 per cent of the company's stake.

Motaz El-Alfi, an Egyptian businessman who runs El-Kharafi group's activities in Egypt, accused Nour of committing a series of financial malpractices and registering in his name, although he had no legal right, the trademark "Americana" in the Commercial Trademarks Registration Authority. El-Alfi argued that it is the El-Kharafi Group which provided APAA's start-up capital, chose the name Americana and, therefore, has the legal right to the trademark. His next move was to place advertisements in major newspapers, asserting that El-Kharafi Group has owned the Americana trademark for the last 35 years. Nour reacted by publishing his own advertisements, stressing that he has the legal right to the trademark and drawing a distinction between El-Kharafi Group's Americana which is "The Kuwaiti Food Company [Americana]", and Nour's own Americana which is "Americana Promotion and Advertising Company". "Their Americana is about food, but mine is about promotion," he announced.

On Thursday 10 July, El-Alfi held a board meeting and ousted Nour, who was in Athens at the time, from the chairman's post. The next day, Nour's aide, Heba Ghazala, hired around 15 men, armed with knives and chains, to protect Americana's premises. Another group of about 40 thugs, believed to have been hired by El-Alfi, showed up outside Americana's offices near the Giza Zoo and attempted to force their way inside. A fight broke out, leaving a hairdresser dead and 12 policemen and six citizens seriously injured.

The battle rang alarm bells that the phenomenon of thuggery was growing on the streets of the nation's major cities. A number of legal and political experts interviewed by *Al-Ahram Weekly* described the government's reaction as inadequate. Some even objected to the government's decision to provide harsher penalties, arguing that law amendments have proved to be insufficient in the past.

According to Kamal Khaled, lawyer and former member of parliament, harsher penalties are the government's "classic" way of dealing with serious phenomena. Citing reaction to the collapse of an apartment building in Heliopolis last year, Khaled said the government issued a military order that imposed stronger punishments for construction offences. "But after some time, the government usually forgets about these penalties until something new happens. The same thing will apply to acts of thuggery."

Khaled said acts of thuggery were on the increase because the government was preoccupied with fighting terrorism. "In this climate, the door becomes wide open for acts of thuggery. The government looks the other way as long as these acts do not touch senior officials and their relatives and their followers. However, the government decided to stiffen penalties for acts of thuggery because they were about to give a bad name to the whole business community," said Khaled.

Ahmed Abu Zeid, leader of the National Democratic Party's parliamentary majority, lauded the government's decision to step up the fight against thuggery. "It is good that the press managed to throw light on this phenomenon. In this way, the press plays a very healthy role. It helps the government uncover social diseases and guides the government to the necessary action," said Abu Zeid. However, he contended that acts of thuggery were the result of a mixture of factors, primarily unemployment and slow justice. "But I think that El-Ganzouri's government is now taking urgent measures to reform the judicial system and confront corruption at both the government and business levels," said Abu Zeid.

From a businessman's perspective, Mustafa El-Said, chairman of the People's Assembly's economic committee, believes that the Americana incident should prompt the government not only to provide harsher penalties but also to amend the Commercial and Civil Pleading Law or even establish special courts for settling business disputes swiftly. "This amendment is important not only to prevent the proliferation of acts of thuggery in the business community, but it is also an important prerequisite for attracting foreign investors," said El-Said.

Mohamed Farid Khamis, chairman of the Federation of Egyptian Industries (FEI), announced that FEI took the initiative this week of forming a "Wisemen's Council" to be entrusted with settling business disputes.

The business community's call for the establishment of special business courts met with strong objections from leftist newspapers and parties. El-Badri Farghali, a leftist member of parliament, said the government bowed to pressure from the business community when it opted for the harsher penalties. "The issue is not thugs and thuggery; the government acted only when these acts of thuggery appeared to tarnish the name of the business community. It is the same government which turned a deaf ear to all the press calls for extending the transitional period afforded to tenant farmers who are threatened with eviction from their land," said El-Badri.

He warned against the establishment of special courts for business disputes. "This will give the business community, which is spoiled already, a privilege over the majority of Egyptians," said El-Badri.

Courts to rule on tenants rights

A human rights group has filed several lawsuits against the government in connection with a law that allegedly violates the rights of tenant farmers. **Mariz Tadros** reports

While some tenant farmers are engaged in a full-fledged ground battle against their possible eviction under the tenant-landlord relationship law, a human rights group is fighting the matter in court.

The Land Centre for Human Rights has filed over 40 lawsuits contesting the law which was passed in 1992 and takes full effect in October. The group alleges that the law, which removes control on agricultural rents and will allow landowners to evict tenants, violates tenants' rights.

The Centre estimates that the law will affect 904,000 tenants or about 31 per cent of the total number of agricultural landholders.

Mahmoud Gabr, the Centre's legal representative, said that the lawsuits currently in progress seek to gain "more just" compensation for tenants than what they were awarded under the 1992 law.

The time-scale for the law gave both tenants and landlords a five-year 'grace period', which ends next October, to establish a new relationship. Under the legislation, the tenant is entitled to compensation if the landlord wishes to terminate the lease contract during this grace period, but he will forfeit the money if he voluntarily chooses to leave.

The tenant was entitled to compensation worth 200 times the value of the land tax if the landowner demanded repossession of the land in 1992, but this amount decreased by 40 times the value of the land tax with the lapse of each year. So, for instance, if the land tax is LE20 per feddan the landowner would be obliged to pay the tenant LE4,000 if he repossessed the land in 1992. If, however, the landlord chose to wait until 1997, he is legally under no obligation to pay compensation.

"Of course if the landowner intends to sell the land [to a third party], he will prefer to delay the retaking of his land to the very end of the five-year grace period since that would minimise his financial obligations towards the tenant. The fate of the tenant is left at the whim of the landowner, who is the real beneficiary of this new law," Gabr asserted.

The Land Centre is demanding that tenants whose lease contracts expire at the end of the grace period be given the right to the compensation of 200 times the value of the land tax, without the yearly deductions. Even the hypothetical figure of LE4,000 per feddan is a modest amount, Gabr argued, but the tenants stand to receive nothing at all when they hand the land back next October.

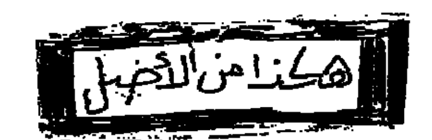
"Usually the tenant does not want money as compensation. A farmer is used to living off the land... so when the landowner asks for his land back, he usually tries to get him to offer some compensatory land instead of money," Gabr added.

The Land Centre does not regard the allocation of reclaimed desert land which the government is offering as adequate compensation for affected tenants. Assuming that each tenant is allocated an average of five feddans, and the Centre estimates there will be nearly one million dispossessed, four and a half million feddans of land would be needed. "Practically, this is inconceivable. Since the time of Mohamed Ali, Egypt has reclaimed less than three million feddans of desert land," Gabr said.

The Land Centre is also planning to contest the 1992 law on the grounds that it is unconstitutional because it allegedly favours landowners over tenants and, consequently, is discriminatory.

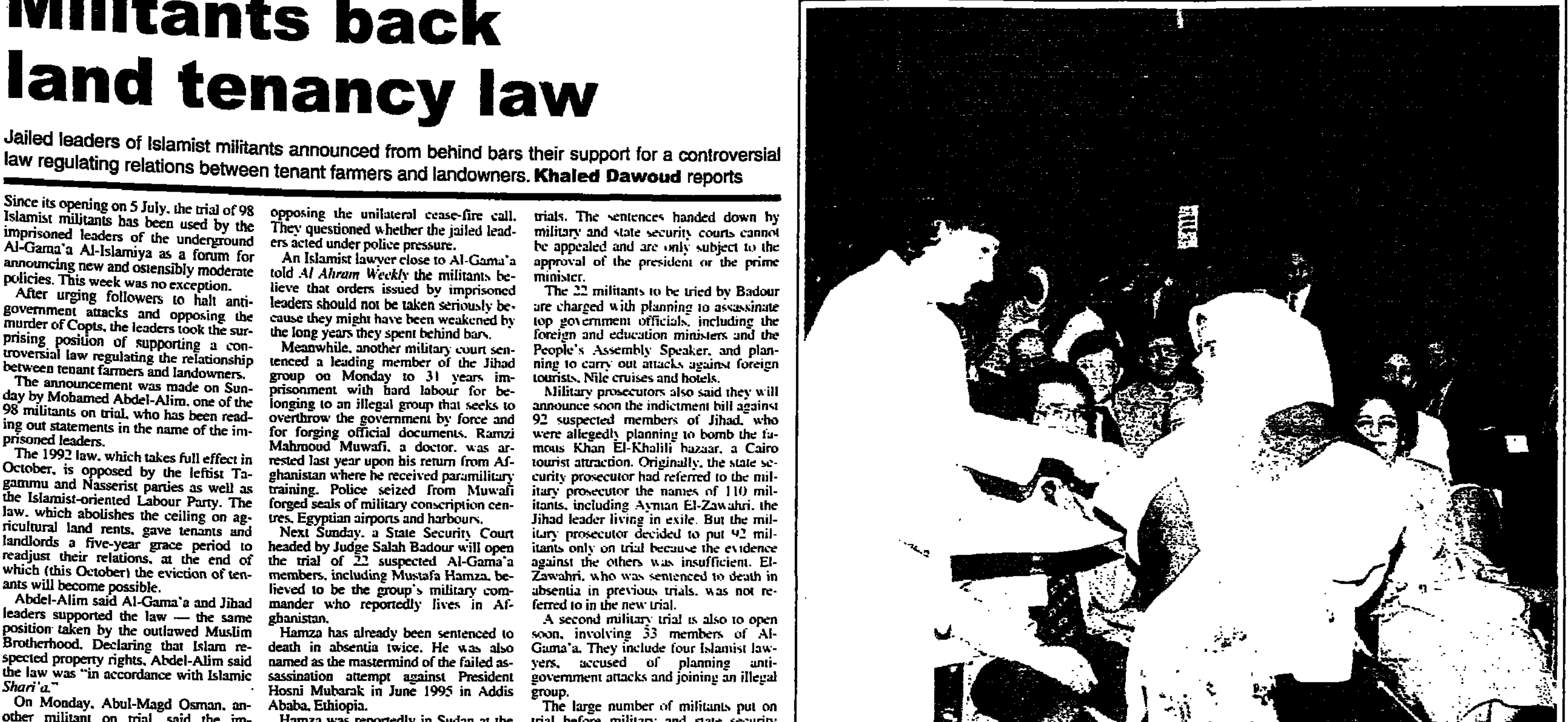
But the Centre's grievances were dismissed by Essam Radi, chairman of parliament's agriculture committee, who said the law will simply bring the tenant-farmer relationship in line with how it should be — a market-governed relationship. He dismissed the likelihood that tenants will be driven off the land, explaining that the relationship between landowner and tenant is symbiotic — just as the tenants need the land, the landowners need farmers to tend it.

Fawzeya Abdel-Sattar, former chairwoman of the legislative committee of the People's Assembly, said that the law is "perfectly in line with the Constitution". She contended that the lawsuits demanding greater compensation for the tenants are nonsensical. "The premise upon which tenants should be compensated is weak simply because the landowner didn't do anything wrong to recompense the tenant for; in fact, he [landowner], has been subjected to unfair conditions over the last 40 years and the new law only seeks to redress the injustice done to the landowner," she said.



Militants back land tenancy law

Jailed leaders of Islamist militants announced from behind bars their support for a controversial law regulating relations between tenant farmers and landowners. Khaled Dawoud reports



Since its opening on 5 July, the trial of 98 Islamist militants has been used by the imprisoned leaders of the underground Al-Gama'a Al-Islamiya as a forum for announcing new and ostensibly moderate policies. This week was no exception.

After urging followers to halt anti-government attacks and opposing the murder of Copts, the leaders took the surprising position of supporting a controversial law regulating the relationship between tenant farmers and landowners.

The announcement was made on Sunday by Mohamed Abdel-Alim, one of the 98 militants on trial, who has been reading out statements in the name of the imprisoned leaders.

The 1992 law, which takes full effect in October, is opposed by the leftist Tagammu and Nasserist parties as well as the Islamist-oriented Labour Party. The law, which abolishes the ceiling on agricultural land rents, gave tenants and landlords a five-year grace period to readjust their relations, at the end of which (this October) the eviction of tenants will become possible.

Abdel-Alim said Al-Gama'a and Jihad leaders supported the law — the same position taken by the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood. Declaring that Islam respected property rights, Abdel-Alim said the law was "in accordance with Islamic *Shari'a*."

On Monday, Abul-Magd Osman, another militant on trial, said the imprisoned leaders were also calling upon Arab governments to "confront Israel's arrogance" and to halt the normalisation of relations with the "enemy."

The statements of the imprisoned leaders have apparently led to a split within Al-Gama'a. Members of the group now living in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sudan and Europe, issued their own statements, opposing the unilateral cease-fire call. They questioned whether the jailed leaders acted under police pressure.

An Islamist lawyer close to Al-Gama'a told *Al Ahram Weekly* the militants believe that orders issued by imprisoned leaders should not be taken seriously because they might have been weakened by the long years they spent behind bars.

Meanwhile, another military court sentenced a leading member of the Jihad group on Monday to 31 years imprisonment with hard labour for belonging to an illegal group that seeks to overthrow the government by force and for forging official documents. Ramzi Mahmoud Muwafi, a doctor, was arrested last year upon his return from Afghanistan where he received paramilitary training. Police seized from Muwafi forged seals of military conscription centres, Egyptian airports and harbours.

Next Sunday, a State Security Court headed by Judge Salah Badour will open the trial of 22 suspected Al-Gama'a members, including Mustafa Hamza, believed to be the group's military commander who reportedly lives in Afghanistan.

Hamza has already been sentenced to death in absentia twice. He was also named as the mastermind of the failed assassination attempt against President Hosni Mubarak in June 1995 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Hamza was reportedly in Sudan at the time of the attempt. He was one of three suspects whom the UN Security Council asked Khartoum to hand over to Ethiopia for trial. Diplomatic sanctions were imposed on Sudan for failing to do so and claiming that the three suspects were not in Sudan.

Judge Badour has sentenced many Al-Gama'a militants to death in previous trials. The sentences handed down by military and state security courts cannot be appealed and are only subject to the approval of the president or the prime minister.

The 22 militants to be tried by Badour are charged with planning to assassinate top government officials, including the foreign and education ministers and the People's Assembly Speaker, and planning to carry out attacks against foreign tourists, Nile cruises and hotels.

Military prosecutors also said they will announce soon the indictment bill against 92 suspected members of Jihad, who were allegedly planning to bomb the famous Khan El-Khalili bazaar, a Cairo tourist attraction. Originally, the state security prosecutor had referred to the military prosecutor the names of 110 militants, including Ayman El-Zawahri, the Jihad leader living in exile. But the military prosecutor decided to put 92 militants only on trial because the evidence against the others was insufficient. El-Zawahri, who was sentenced to death in absentia in previous trials, was not referred to in the new trial.

A second military trial is also to open soon, involving 33 members of Al-Gama'a. They include four Islamist lawyers, accused of planning anti-government attacks and joining an illegal group.

The large number of militants put on trial before military and state security courts since the beginning of this year reflects the government's determination not to show any sign of compromise or leniency towards armed Islamist groups, analysts believe. For the government, those who commit acts of violence are "terrorists" who should be brought to justice. Opening a dialogue with them is out of the question.

WOMEN'S EDUCATION, WOMEN'S ROLE: Mrs Suzanne Mubarak said on Tuesday that the basis of a modern society, in which men and women have equal opportunities, is a good education system for women.

She noted that Egypt was the region's pioneer in women's education, opening schools for girls in the 19th century, which made it possible for women to participate in the national struggle alongside men at a later date.

Mrs Mubarak made the remarks at a ceremony honouring the graduates of the "one-class schools" and "community schools", held at the Ministry of Education. Education is the key to the "pivotal" role which women should play in economic and social development as the nation stands on the threshold of the 21st century, she added.

Uses and abuses of MP immunity

In the past 18 months, nine deputies have been stripped of their parliamentary immunity so that they might face trial or investigation. Gamal Essam El-Din reviews the cost of parliamentary immunity

Is immunity really necessary for a member of the People's Assembly to exercise his legislative duties? Isn't it true that immunity may encourage some MPs to become involved in financial malpractices? And when should a deputy be stripped of his immunity? These are some questions that are being raised in political circles following the Assembly's controversial refusal to lift the immunity of Mustafa El-Said, a former economy minister and current chairman of the Assembly's economic committee, for alleged breach of trust.

The Assembly's legislative committee originally approved two requests for lifting El-Said's immunity, which it said were not motivated by malice, on the grounds that it would be "best for him to defend himself before a court of law." But when the requests reached the full house, they were turned down.

Most analysts agree that immunity is intended to protect the deputy so that he may express his views on the government's performance freely and fearlessly. Since this is the *raison d'etre* of immunity, they argue, why should the Assembly continue to protect a deputy who is facing allegations of financial wrong-doing?

According to Kamal Khaled, a lawyer and former independent MP, the Assembly's decisions to lift, or refuse to lift, immunity are inconsistent. He cited the case of Ali Fath El-Bab, the only representative of the Islamist-oriented Labour party in parliament. The Ministry of Justice requested the lifting of his immunity so that he could be investigated for alleged collaboration with the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood.

Khaled said that the Assembly's legislative committee turned down the request on the grounds that it did not contain clear-cut charges. But the following day, the Assembly, in a plenary session, approved it by a large majority.

On the other hand, Khaled said, the requests for lifting El-Said's immunity were sent to the Assembly in April but did not reach the legislative committee until June. "Why are decisions on some requests delayed, while others are considered at surprising speed?" Khaled asked. "The answer is that the Assembly surrendered most of its powers to the government a long time ago. If a certain request is approved it means that the government wants to turn the tables on a particular MP, as in the case of Fath El-Bab. Rejecting other requests shows that the government is keen to provide protection to some loyal MPs, especially those of the ruling National Democratic Party [NDP]."

This allegation was rejected, however, by Mohamed Moussa, chairman of the legislative committee, who denied that action on requests for lifting a deputy's immunity is motivated by political considerations or government pressure. Moussa cited the case of the four "loan deputies" who are standing trial, along with others, on charges of misappropriating the staggering amount of LE868 million. "All of them are NDP members but this was not an obstacle to the lifting of their immunity," Moussa said. It is true, he added, that the Justice Ministry's request for lifting their immunity was initially rejected but this was because the prosecution had not decided at the time to put them on trial.

In the case of Fath El-Bab, Moussa said, the legislative committee first deemed it adequate to allow him to testify before prosecution authorities but this changed when Fath El-Bab himself insisted that his immunity be lifted so that he might be able to defend himself more effectively.

The majority of requests for stripping deputies of their immunity during the last few years were based on charges of financial wrong-doing, Kamal Khaled commented. "The sprint towards privatisation and individual enterprise has opened the door before the elite to tap new highly lucrative business fields," he said. "MPs soon recognised that immunity is a basic and necessary weapon for venturing into the business world. This not only explains why the number of candidates in the 1995 elections soared to an unprecedented 4,018 but also throws light on why many of them were ready to squander hundreds of thousands of pounds in order to get elected. The belief is widespread now that membership of parliament, and the concomitant immunity, are among the few magic doors leading to riches and social status."

In the 1995/96 session, six MPs lost their immunity. They included the four "loan deputies" who were charged, along with other businessmen and bankers, with misappropriating the funds of a number of banks in violation of regulations laid down by the Central Bank of Egypt.

In the 1996-97 session, three more deputies lost their immunity. They included Abdellah Selim, a deputy from the Sinai Peninsula, who was charged with misappropriating the public funds of the Productive Society for Construction and Development in Sinai. Another was Khairi Rohaiem, a deputy from the Giza governorate, who acquired an unlicensed weapon after he became involved in a dispute over a piece of land.

Raafat Seif of the leftist Tagammu party agreed with Khaled that the majority of immunity-lifting requests were related to financial malpractice, mainly misappropriation of bank loans and real estate. "This shows to what extent MPs count on parliamentary immunity in having easy access to the sources of money and power, especially in an age of free enterprise," Seif said.

By contrast, Fawzia Abdel-Sattar, former chairwoman of the legislative committee, ruled out any link between parliamentary immunity and the new economic liberalisation policies. "These policies are primarily aimed at reforming the economy," she said. "So, they should lead to raising productivity rates rather than fostering criminal phenomena, especially financial crimes."

Saudi paper slammed in libel case

Six Egyptian and Saudi journalists, five of them standing trial in absentia, face up to three years imprisonment if convicted of slandering the two sons of President Mubarak. Khaled Dawoud reports



Lawyer of the two Saudi publishers in the libel case filed by Alaa and Gamal Mubarak making a point (centre) while arguing his case in front of Abdin Court earlier this week

The Abdin Misdemeanours Court was packed with lawyers on Sunday when it resumed hearings of a libel case brought by President Hosni Mubarak's two sons, Alaa and Gamal, against six Egyptian and Saudi journalists working for the London-based *Al- Sharq Al-Awsat* newspaper and its sister publication, *Al-Jadida* magazine.

The Saudi publishers of the newspaper, Hisham and Mohamed Ali Hafez, and the Saudi editor-in-chief of the magazine, Othman Al-Omayer, together with two London-based Egyptian editors and a journalist working for the local opposition daily *Al-Wafd* were allegedly involved in publishing an article in *Al-Jadida* in May claiming that Alaa and Gamal had abused their influence to gain lucrative business deals.

On the eve of *Al-Jadida* magazine's appearance, *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* ran a full-page advertisement about its contents under the headline "the deals and commissions of Alaa and Gamal Mubarak." The advertisement listed the deals in which the president's two sons were allegedly involved.

Faced by a strong reaction from the president's sons, *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* published a second advertisement the following day, announcing that the release of *Al-Jadida* would be delayed. The advertisement included an apology for the earlier advertisement, conceding that it was "exaggerated" and not based on facts.

The magazine appeared one day behind schedule without the article on the president's sons. The publishers said they had banned the distribution of copies containing the article which had already been printed.

The Hafez brothers also sent a formal apology to President Mubarak and Information Minister Safwat El-Sherif, declaring that they had taken action to punish those responsible. Fawzia Salama and Gamal Ismail, both Egyptian editors at the magazine's headquarters in London, were fired.

The local *Wafd* journalist Sayed Abdel-Atti, who wrote the article for the Saudi magazine, is the only defendant being tried in person. He said he was suing *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* for changing his original copy and adding material to his article.

Raga'i Attiya, the lawyer acting for the president's sons, told the court that his clients would not drop the case, despite the apologies they had received, "because the damage done is beyond repair."

Attiya, who spoke for nearly two and a half hours, despite protests from lawyers of some other defendants, said *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* was one of the most technologically advanced newspapers in the Arab world, printing via satellite in 19 countries simultaneously, "making the scandal and the violation unprecedented in the history of Arab and even international journalism.

"What happened was a crime and an attempt to destroy the social status of my clients. The only way to repair this damage was to hold a public trial so that the court could tell the world that what was published about my clients was nothing but lies," Attiya told Judge Salah Gawish.

Attiya said that withdrawing the magazine from the market was not enough because people might be more inclined to conclude that it was the result of some sort of secret deal rather than that the accusations the magazine contained were false. He handed the court 15 copies of the magazine to support his claim that some copies had already been distributed before the publishers withdrew it from the market.

He also presented several documents provided by *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat's* office in Cairo purporting to show that the London-based editors were parties to a "wicked conspiracy."

But to the surprise of the lawyers of the local *Wafd* reporter, Abdel-Atti, Attiya came out in his support. He said that the documents given to him by *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat's* Cairo office proved that Abdel-Atti's original article had been changed to include more "rumours" about the alleged business deals of Alaa and Gamal. Abdel-Atti's lawyers asked the court to take note of "every single word" Attiya said because "this is the most concrete proof that our client is innocent."

Magdi Mehana, a member of the Press Syndicate's council, who attended the hearings, testified that the syndicate was supporting Abdel-Atti's claim that the Saudi newspaper had introduced alterations to his original article in violation of the Syndicate's code of ehtics. Mehana said the Syndicate would back Abdel-Atti's case against *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat.*

The fact that Attiya spoke for more than two hours angered the other lawyers who came to defend the Saudi publishers and the two other Egyptian editors.

Ibrahim Saleh, a prominent lawyer who served as the deputy chairman of the Court of Cassation at one stage, said that Attiya was taking over the prosecutor's role and asked the court to adjourn the hearing in order to give him more time to study the case. He also asked the court to summon Information Minsiter Safwat El-Sherif as a witness to testify whether all copies of *Al-Jadida* magazine were confiscated.

Defending the Hafez brothers, Mohamed Asfour, another well-known lawyer, argued that the Abdin Court had no jurisdiction to conduct hearings because, with the exception of Abdel-Atti, all the defendants are living in London and *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*'s headquarters are in the same city.

But Attiya insisted that the Abdin Court was qualified to rule on the case because the newspaper is distributed in Egypt. He also supported the prosecutor's demand for the maximum sentence against the six defendants, which is three years imprisonment and a fine of LE7,500.

Prosecutor Amr Marwan asked the court to turn down the lawyers' demands that more witnesses be called, saying that it was an attempt to delay a verdict. He also insisted that all defendants had been informed of the charges filed against them and that letters to this effect had been sent to *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* headquarters in London. But the defendants' lawyers argued that this procedure was not sufficient and that their clients had to be informed at their home addresses.

Ibrahim Kanaan, a lawyer for the Hafez brothers who flew from London to follow the case, denied that his clients were responsible for publishing the advertisement or the article in *Al-Jadida* magazine. "They are the publishers and owners, and they did not see or approve any of this material," Kanaan told *Al-Ahram Weekly.*

Judge Gawish adjourned hearings until 9 September.

War film's fate still to be decided

Egyptian Television is reconsidering a decision against the production of a film on the Arab-Israeli conflict after the script won the approval of the censorship board. Mona El-Nahhas reports

Cinema director Ali Abdel-Khaleq's plans for producing a historical drama depicting the various stages of the Arab-Israeli conflict from the 1967 war until the 1982 invasion of Lebanon suffered a severe setback when the production sector of the Egyptian Radio and Television Union, which was to provide the financing, turned down the script.

But soon afterwards the censorship board, the sole body empowered by law to license or turn down a work of art, approved the script, written by Mohamed Galal Abdel-Qawi.

"The script is really good and deserves to be filmed," commented Ali Abu Shadi, head of the censorship board, adding that apart from a few technical "remarks," he had no reservations about the text. However, Abu Shadi made it a condition that a military adviser attend the shooting of the film to "guarantee accuracy and credibility."

The film is to be called *Netanya* after an Israeli prisoner of war camp where Egyptian and Syrian POWs were detained following the 1967 war. It is based on the true story of an Egyptian prisoner who was detained at the camp where he suffered torture at the hands of his Israeli captors. He manages to escape with the help of a Palestinian woman. The two fall in love and the Egyptian gets his revenge against the Israelis in the 1973 war.

Abdel-Khaleq was surprised and "incensed" by the position taken by officials at the production sector of the Radio and Television Union. "I cannot understand how they can turn down a script for reasons related to censorship, at a time when the head of the censorship board approves it," Abdel-Khaleq told *Al-Ahram Weekly.* "Moreover, their report said the script has technical faults and cannot be filmed easily. I was outraged by their report because it is not their business to deal with the film's technical aspects. I am the director and the one who decides whether the script is technically up to standard or not."

Abdel-Khaleq has now been informed that the Radio and Television Union will reconsider its decision. According to Abdel-Khaleq, the Union's head, Abdel-Rahman Hafez, has promised to refer the script to another specialised committee for its opinion. The locations, actors and actresses will be chosen once Abdel-Khaleq gains the Union's approval.

He agrees on the necessity of the presence of a military adviser during the shooting. This adviser, he said, should not interfere with the script but simply provide advice on technical details.

Although Abdel-Khaleq says the film will be impartial, projecting the viewpoints of both sides, it will nevertheless "expose Israel's lies about its so-called respect for human rights and show that the crimes committed at Netanya are one link in a long chain of massacres from Deir Yassin [in Palestine in 1948] to Qana [in Lebanon last year]."

Edited by **Wadie Kirolos**

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Negotiations or not

As nine Palestinian-Israeli joint committees prepare to resume their activities, does this represent a resumption of negotiations? asks **Graham Usher** in Jerusalem

After a hiatus of four months, "talks" are about to resume between Israel and the Palestinians. On 28 July, Israel's Foreign Minister David Levy and PLO chief negotiator, Nabil Shaath, announced that nine joint committees would be reactivated "within days" to address issues still outstanding from Oslo's interim agreement.

Dormant since March, when the PLO suspended all negotiations in protest at Israel's decision to build the Har Homa settlement at Jebel Abu Ghneim, the committees will seek "practical solutions" to the issues of opening a Palestinian sea and airport in Gaza, establishing a safe passage between Gaza and the West Bank, and releasing a further 500 Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails.

Israeli leader Binyamin Netanyahu was swift to claim the talks constituted "negotiations", stressing that these had been realised without any cessation of settlement construction by Israel. For the same reason, the official Palestinian line was that the talks did not constitute negotiations but, in the words of Shaath, "confidence building measures" aimed at extricating the peace process from its current "deadlock".

Whatever the rhetoric, the reconvening of committees clearly represents negotiations of a sort, and as such constitutes a climb down from the Palestinian condition to cease all co-operation with Israel until the settlements issue had been resolved. This, say sources, was the price the Palestinian leadership had to pay to expedite the US's re-involvement in the negotiations.

Last week, US special Middle East envoy Dennis Ross telephoned Yasser Arafat to say he would soon be returning to the region with a new American initiative to resuscitate the Oslo process.

Details of the initiative are murky but, according to Israeli press reports, the basic trade-off appears to be a freeze on settlement construction for the duration of Oslo's final status negotiations in exchange for a strengthening of security cooperation from the Palestinian Authority (PA), including a commitment to curb street protests such as those that recently raged in Hebron and Gaza.

Judging from the responses of both Arafat and Netanyahu, the US initiative appears to be serious. In the last month, the PLO leader has mobilised the police force in Hebron to quell the protests there and, under pressure from the Americans, launched an investigation into four Palestinian police officers who Israel alleges were behind attacks on Israeli settlers in the West Bank. At the behest of Israel, the US and Egypt, Arafat also removed the "hard-line" Saeb Erekat as the PLO's chief negotiator, replacing him with the more conciliatory Shaath. The cumulative effect of these gestures was to bring the PLO and Israel back to the negotiating table in line with American wishes. But, having delivered his side of the deal Arafat will now expect Netanyahu to deliver a temporary freeze on settlement building, especially at Har Homa.

It is by no means certain Netanyahu will do this. Alarmed by the terms of the US initiative, Netanyahu last week dispatched Israel's cabinet secretary, Danny Naveh, for "high level consultations" with US officials. According to a report in the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* on 25 July, Naveh told the Americans it would be impossible for Netanyahu to accept any settlement freeze and keep his coalition intact. The most the Israeli government could offer would be a "slow-down" in construction, he said. The Americans, it appears, were unimpressed.

It was at this point that Israel's Jerusalem municipality granted permission to Irving Moscovitz to build 70 housing units at Ras El-Amoud, an exclusively Palestinian village on the edge of Jerusalem's old city. The case would appear to be a re-run of Har Homa, with Moscovitz (and Jerusalem mayor, Ehud Olmert) claiming the right of Jews to build "anywhere in Jerusalem" and PLO officials warning of "catastrophe" should the settlement go ahead. The difference, however, has been in Netanyahu's reaction.

On news of the municipality's decision, the Israeli leader informed Yasser Arafat that the government would use all means to "stop the neighbourhood". Netanyahu conveyed the same message to Dennis Ross, President Mubarak and King Hussein. At the Israeli cabinet meeting on 27 July, while insisting that Israel had the right to "implement its sovereignty (sic) throughout Jerusalem...", Netanyahu also made it clear that "there is right now no sense in building at Ras El-Amoud". Netanyahu won a majority from his cabinet for this stand, with only National Infrastructure Minister, Ariel Sharon, denouncing him for "sucking up to Arafat".

Does Netanyahu's new "pragmatism" augur a readiness to accept a general settlement freeze? Most Palestinian commentators believe it signals the opposite. The reason, they say, Netanyahu will play the moderate over a few dozen houses in Ras El-Amoud is to deflect American attention from the thousands of units that are currently being built not only at Jebel Abu Ghneim but throughout the Occupied Territories. In waiting for Ross, Arafat and the Palestinian leadership should be wary that the price for Ras El-Amoud is not going to be Har Homa.

'A state for the people, not the PLO'

For many years, Bassam Abu Sharif was the PLO's official spokesman. In 1996, he returned to Gaza to work as a writer and "occasional adviser" to PLO leader Yasser Arafat. In an interview with Graham Usher, Abu Sharif assesses the possible consequences of two recent events — last week's meeting in Brussels between Arafat and Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy, and the submission of a specially commissioned report by Arafat on corruption and mismanagement in the Palestinian Authority (PA)



A Palestinian woman passes by closed shops as an Israeli soldier stands guard in the centre of Hebron. The Israeli army banned a number of Palestinian shopowners in the city from opening their doors after the explosion of three homemade bombs near Jewish settlements in the centre of town *(photo: AFP)*

What is your assessment of the Brussels meeting?

In Brussels, I believe President Arafat was extremely flexible. He threw the ball back into Israel's court. He accepted the link between (Israel's) security and progress on the peace track.

In return, Israel has agreed to reactivate the committees set up to deal with outstanding issues from Oslo's interim phase such as the sea ports and airports in Gaza and the establishment of a safe passage between Gaza and the West Bank. These committees will be the context for the next American initiative.

Can you explain what you mean?

Netanyahu's consistent demand of the Palestinians is security, security and still more security. At Brussels, Arafat pledged to fulfil all the security requirements that are obligated under the various Oslo agreements, including a willingness to investigate those Palestinian police officers Israel alleges were behind attacks on Israelis in the West Bank.

This stance disarmed Levy in front of the Europeans. Apart from security, the only issue Levy was empowered to talk about at Brussels was reactivating the committees. Thus Brussels did not resume negotiations. Rather, it enabled an exchange of gestures to prepare the ground for the Americans, to create an illusion that something is moving so that Ross or Albright can come to the region next month. Only when the Americans come will the parties address substantive issues like settlements.

Without this, Netanyahu will not move. Neither will Arafat, especially after having mobilised the whole world on the issue of settlements, including the UN General Assembly.

Movement will come with the Americans and, for negotiations to resume, I believe the Americans will have to propose a temporary freeze on settlement building. To pacify Netanyahu, I believe the Americans will also propose accelerating the final status negotiations parallel to implementing the rest of the interim agreement.

So as far as the Palestinians are concerned, there can be no full negotiations without at least a temporary halt to settlement construction...?

I have learned never to be categorical in politics. Let me just say it would be very, very difficult for Arafat to resume negotiations without at least a temporary freeze on settlement building.

Since Oslo, there has been a lot of criticism of the PA and of the performance of the Palestinian negotiators. Do you accept these criticisms?

My view is that the PA could and should have performed better. We have made a lot of mistakes in relation to planning, in the organisation of the national authority and in recruitment of professionals. Having said this, I would also say that many of the criticisms levelled at the PA are exaggerated. But that doesn't negate the first answer — that our performance was lacking in many areas.

Of course, the counter-argument to this is that we were starting from zero, that we had no experience in state building. But this is not true — we did have experience. The PLO was a state in exile; it ran departments, had a hierarchy of command, had its own by-laws. We didn't arrive cold in Gaza and the West Bank.

Following the report on corruption, I think there is an opportunity for Arafat to make changes that will ensure better performance and monitoring of the ministries and other PA institutions. The report should also open the door to recruit Palestinians with the right expertise and professional know-how for the right positions. This is especially required in the technical fields.

Do you expect a ministerial reshuffle?

Yes, though I doubt whether it will be dramatic. Arafat will have to navigate between contending interests and different power centres within the authority.

But I believe corrective mechanisms will be introduced and, from these, a new government will be formed. I also expect there will be greater control over the PA's security forces, with greater internal discipline, especially given what Arafat pledged in Brussels.

Some commentators say the real problem is less the performance of this or that minister, than the mentality: That the PLO has yet to make the transition from a national liberation movement to a national authority responsible for building a state...

Yes, I agree completely. The critical challenge we have faced is how to build a state that is habitable for the entire Palestinian people, responsible for the entire people, rather than for the people of the PLO.

Look at the PA's security forces. The bases of these were the old Palestine Liberation Army. Suddenly, this army is supposed to become a police force, a fire brigade, a traffic police and I don't know what...When the PA arrived, it was understandable that Arafat would want to depend on his men. But now we need a more professional police force, with proper training and recruitment procedures for the security tasks a modern police force has to fulfil.

But it is not simply the old PLO organisation that should change. There needs to be a change in the mentality of the leadership. The leadership still operates in a very centralised way, the way of the PLO in exile. This is a big problem. If you delegate only limited powers to a minister, you cripple the ministry — nothing can be done without reference to the boss. But today we need ministers who can formulate their own plans, in accordance with their own budgets, so as to implement their own programmes. We have yet to reach that stage.

Palestinian officials accused of corruption

A PANEL of Palestinian lawmakers investigating corruption urged Palestinian President Yasser Arafat to sack his entire cabinet and put three ministers suspected of wrongdoing on trial.

"The committee recommends to the president of the Palestinian Authority to dissolve the cabinet and form a new one made up of technocrats and qualified people," a report to be presented to the Palestinian Legislative Council said.

It recommended that Civilian Affairs Minister Jamil Al-Tarifi, Planning Minister Nabil Shaath and Transport Minister Ali Kawasmeh be brought to trial.

The recommendations, made in a report by a panel of nine lawmakers, said that "the president of the Authority should issue his instructions to punish violators against whom there has been proof of guilt and to punish them immediately and to take them to court in order to restore confidence between the Palestinian Authority and its people." It also called for action against security forces who interfered in the collection of taxes and customs duties.

Nabil Amr, a member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, said the report would receive a first reading before going to the cabinet. It would then return to the council for two further readings, he said.

The panel was set up by Arafat in response to a state auditor's report in May that found $326 million of the Palestinian Authority's $800 million annual budget had been squandered through corruption or mismanagement.

Tales of graft and nepotism, and brazen shows of wealth by government officials with huge villas and four or five cars apiece, have raised resentment among ordinary Palestinians and concern among international donors. So has the appointment to high office of political cronies who do not even bother to show up for work.

Azmi Shuabi, a member of the panel, told The Associated Press news agency that the $320 million figure was exaggerated. He said an accurate figure could only be determined after an investigation by the state attorney.

US acts to 'restore hope' in negotiations

The expected resumption of Israeli-Palestinian talks next week fulfils a US priority, yet major issues of dispute remain unresolved. **Lamis Andoni** reports from Washington

Since Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat suspended talks with Israel in March in protest over Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's decision to build a new Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem, the US's major goal in the Middle East has been to bring the two parties back to the negotiating table. It appears that the Americans have gotten their wish and a total collapse of the peace process has been temporarily averted.

Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy announced the recent "breakthrough" after a meeting with Palestinian chief negotiator Nabil Shaath in Jerusalem on Monday. Levy stated that talks will begin next week to address disputes over the implementation of previously signed agreements.

American officials argue that the resumption of negotiations will at least "help restore hope in the process" among Palestinians and the Israelis. From the official Palestinian view, this glimpse of hope, faint as it may be, eases concerns over mounting popular discontent. For the US, a resumption of talks will provide the necessary semblance of movement to accelerate Israeli-Arab regional cooperation before the opening of the Middle East and North Africa Economic Conference, MENA, in Doha, Qatar, in November.

Yet the main issues that have disrupted the talks remain unresolved.

Palestinian negotiators complain that the basis of the resumption of talks is a continuation of the "crisis management" approach that has characterised the American administration's handling of the peace process. They assert that the US will not go beyond containing the impending crisis, while Israel will continue its settlement building and procrastinate on the next phases of troop redeployments in the West Bank.

A crucial factor in the Palestinian decision to return to negotiations is the leadership's need for financial aid. It is no coincidence that the Palestinians agreed to resume talks on outstanding interim issues on the same day the American administration declared that it will push for an extension of the law that allows it to give financial aid to the Palestinian Authority.

This incomplete "compromise formula" that the US has put together is based on ideas that it has recycled to ensure a resumption of the stalled negotiations. The ideas, according to information available to *Al-Ahram Weekly* from Palestinian and American sources, include the following:

- The PA's compliance with its "security responsibilities" in return for the beginning of talks on some outstanding issues, such as the opening of a safe passage between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, opening the Gaza sea and air ports and the release of thousands of Palestinian prisoners.
- "A pause" in Israeli settlement construction on Jebel Abu Ghneim in return for the Palestinians agreeing to start the final status negotiations. The details of this part of the agreement are still being worked out.

Following the crisis over Abu Ghneim, the Palestinians took a firm stance towards resuming the peace talks. They refused to return to negotiations merely to talk about the opening of the safe passage between the West Bank and Gaza and the sea and air ports in Gaza. They maintained that those issues were already settled in earlier talks and signed by both parties.

But it appears that the deteriorating economic and political conditions in the West Bank and Gaza and fear of spreading discontent has prompted the Palestinian leadership to backtrack.

This latest compromise indicates that the American and Israeli interpretations of the Hebron Protocols signed in January have prevailed. According to the Points of Record attached to the Hebron agreement and mediated by special US peace envoy Dennis Ross, the two sides agreed to "confidence-building measures". These included a Palestinian commitment to specific security measures "to combat terrorism", while in return Israel would start negotiating the outstanding interim issues — excluding further redeployments.

Palestinians negotiators believed that the Palestinian security commitments were not a problem since the Authority was already complying with its part of the deal. But a letter of assurances, written by former Secretary of State Warren Christopher following the Hebron Protocols, allowed Israel to define the security measures with which the Palestinians are expected to comply. It also allowed Israel to determine the scope of any further redeployments in the West Bank.

Further evidence that the Israeli and American view of the peace process has prevailed is that during recent Palestinian-American meetings in Washington, the Americans endorsed in principle Israel's demand that the final status negotiations begin immediately. The Palestinians responded that they would accept provided that previously agreed measures were carried out, including further redeployment.

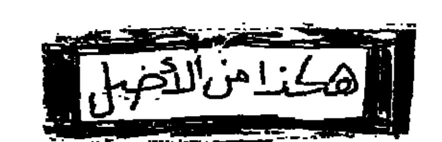
Yet, the issue of whether redeployment or final status negotiations would start first proved to be a stumbling block. The Americans, according to Palestinian sources, have pressured the Palestinians to show flexibility regarding starting the final status talks before Israel carried out its commitments to further redeploy its forces.

The Palestinians had until recently been demanding a complete halt to settlement building as well as an Israeli commitment to refrain from unilateral steps that prejudice the outcome of the final status negotiations. In the past two weeks, however, the tone has changed and Palestinian officials and negotiators are now willing to accept a "cessation" in construction at Jebel Abu Ghneim. Practically, this means that the Palestinian leadership has dropped its demand for a halt to the expansion of settlements — which the US does not consider to be a violation of signed agreements between the two parties.

Meanwhile, Israel has so far accepted the principle of a "connection between redeployment and final status negotiations" but it insists on determining how much land in the West Bank it will keep as part of its "security areas".

In return for scaling back their demands, the Palestinians were hoping that the US would prevent Israel from taking further unilateral steps that could undermine the credibility of the Palestinian leadership among its constituency. Consequently the Israeli Jerusalem municipality's announcement of plans to build new Jewish houses in the middle of an Arab quarter in Jerusalem last week threatened to sabotage the deal to break the stalemate.

The Israeli premier's decision to delay the plans was immediately welcomed by the US and Palestinians. This was another indication that the Palestinian leadership has shifted its position and that it is ready to accept a temporary freeze only in Jebel Abu Ghneim and not a total halt of any settlement activity in occupied Palestinian territories.



King and Brotherhood keep doors open

Despite an expected dialogue between Jordan's government and the Muslim Brotherhood, hopes are low that the influential group will reverse its decision to boycott the next parliamentary elections. **Lola Keilani** reports from Amman

Observers here are awaiting the results of a meeting scheduled to take place next week between the government and the Muslim Brotherhood to discuss the Islamist group's decision to boycott the parliamentary elections scheduled for November. The meeting was called at the initiative of King Hussein.

The Islamic Action Front (IAF), the political wing of the Muslim Brotherhood, supported the decision of its leadership following a stormy meeting last Thursday. They were followed in this decision by leftist and centrist opposition groups who all agree that the upcoming elections lack the necessary conditions to ensure that they will be free and fair.

King Hussein initiated the call for a dialogue after the government of Prime Minister Abdel-Salam Al-Majali shrugged off the Brotherhood's decision to boycott the elections and turned down their demand for a meeting to discuss their differences. Last week, Al-Majali issued a statement stressing that the reasons behind the Islamic movement's decision were unjustified and that "the government believes that the boycott is born of an internal crisis within the ranks of the Brotherhood."

For the Muslim Brotherhood, Al-Majali's statement "closed the door for any dialogue". The Brotherhood's Supreme Guide, Abdul-Majid Zunibat responded by listing the reasons that prompted his movement to reach its boycott decision. He reiterated his condemnation of the 1994 peace treaty with Israel, the normalisation of ties between it and Jordan, the new press and publication law and the one-person-one-vote election system which the opposition parties claim was approved by the government in order to reduce the Brotherhood's chances of winning more seats in parliament.

Adnan Majali, president of the IAF's highest decision-making body, the 120-member Shura Council, said, "Dialogue with the government will continue because it is in the national interest."

According to official sources, a meeting between Zunibat and Chief of the Royal Court Awn Khasawneh was held early this week in order to defuse the crisis between the Brotherhood and Al-Majali. In this meeting, the Brotherhood's leader reportedly agreed to halt his group's media campaign calling for the boycott of the elections and to hold a meeting with Al-Majali early next week upon the Prime Minister's return from an official visit to Oman and Malaysia.

A source close to the Muslim Brotherhood revealed that Zunibat told Khasawneh at the meeting, which took place at the Royal Palace, that reversing the decision on the elections would be very difficult because it was taken by a majority of cadres at the grass-roots level as well as in the Shura Council of the IAF. Consequently, if the Brotherhood were to be asked by King Hussein to reverse its decision, Zunibat said that he would have to consult first with members of the group who voted against participating in the elections.



King Hussein during talks with Israeli Foreign Minister David Levi on Tuesday. Relations between the two countries remain strong despite rising popular opposition in Jordan (photo AFP)

A source in the Brotherhood told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that the movement already halted its media campaign calling on the people to defy the government and boycott the elections. "We had to resort to such means because the government was ignoring the fact that there was a national crisis," the source said. The source added that the movement conveyed to the King's representative its fears that the next elections will be rigged up in favour of the National Constitution Party, a centrist pro-establishment merger of seven political parties headed by the prime minister's brother. The Brotherhood also complained that the government was unfairly targeting them.

But Jordanian government sources ruled out the possibility that Al-Majali would make any major concessions to the Brotherhood, particularly in terms of the recently approved laws on press freedoms and elections. The only "concession" that Al-Majali is reportedly ready to make is to invite international observers to monitor the elections if an official request is presented to him by the Brotherhood. However, Al-Majali earlier categorically refused to call in observers and was quoted as saying that "Jordan is not a minor nascent state and has not gone through a civil war to require international observers for elections."

According to Brotherhood sources, Khasawneh told Zunibat during their meeting that the King "hopes that all parties will shoulder their responsibilities and open a dialogue with the government to reach an agreement in the interest of Jordan."

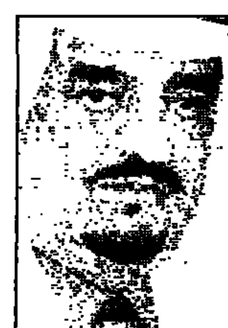
Meanwhile, the Brotherhood's leadership decision on the election boycott has led to a division within the group between the so-called moderates who oppose the boycott and hard-liners who maintain a majority in favour of it. Five leading IAF members, including Secretary-General Ishaq Farhan, announced they were resigning from their posts after the party's Shura Council passed its resolution in favour of the boycott on Thursday, with a majority of 80 votes against 16. Twenty-four members of the Council were absent. Farhan said, however, that he was resigning only from his post as IAF secretary-general and not from the Brotherhood or the Islamist party as a whole. He also stressed that the dissenting members would not run for elections in violation of the group's decision.

The five dissidents have voiced several times in the past their disagreement with the Muslim Brotherhood's threats to boycott elections. Hamzeh Mansour, IAF spokesman, said that "the boycott was against the interests of the people and the development of democratic life in Jordan." The IAF, which won 15 out of the 80 parliamentary seats in the 1993 elections, is the largest political party in Jordan.

Independent observers speculate that the Muslim Brotherhood might pay a heavy price for its boycott decision since new faces might surface and win the support of the people in its absence. These new figures might use the opportunity to develop their own charismatic appeal to the man on the street as have done Leith Shbeilate and Tujan Faisal, two charismatic independent opposition figures in Jordan.

Saudi Arabia and Yemen narrow gap

Yemen and Saudi Arabia have renewed contact in an attempt to solve their 63-year-old border dispute and observers are optimistic



King Fahd



Ali Abdullah Saleh

Yemen's President Ali Abdullah Saleh has sent a letter to Saudi Arabia's King Fahd about their 63 year-old border dispute, reports **Rania El-Razzaz**.

The letter, believed to outline Yemen's response to a Saudi proposal for the resolution of their border problem, was delivered to the king in Jeddah by Yemeni Interior Minister Hussein Mohamed Arab.

Arab also met Saudi Arabian Interior Minister Nayef Ibn Abdel-Aziz during his brief visit. Nayef was quoted as saying that the letter "will give a great push towards an agreement... on the border issue."

Earlier this month, Nayef made his second visit within a month to Sanaa, delivering King Fahd's proposal to the Yemeni President for the resolution of their border issue.

"The new proposal has narrowed the gap between Yemen and Saudi Arabia to a great extent, and the outlook is now better," Saleh said after receiving the letter.

The Saudi-Yemeni exchange of visits were part of an attempt to revive the stalled negotiations between the two countries over the unsettled frontiers, which some experts claim are rich in oil. Due to the deadlock in the talks and the lack of communication between officials in the two countries over the past year, some Yemeni newspapers have suggested that Sanaa should resort to international arbitration to solve its border dispute with Riyadh.

The latest visits are also intended to cool Yemeni anger over King Fahd's refusal to meet Yemen's Foreign Minister Abdel Karim Al-Iriany during a visit to Saudi Arabia earlier this year. Al-Iriany wanted to hand a message to the Saudi monarch from President Saleh.

The Saudi-Yemeni border dispute concerns a sector of land running east from Jabal Al-Thar to the Omani-Yemeni border, and indeed is nothing new in their history as neighbours. In 1934, when King Abdel-Aziz Al-Saud succeeded in establishing modern Saudi Arabia, the two countries drafted the Treaty of Taif in which only the stretch of border from the Red Sea coast to the Saudi border city of Najran was demarcated. The remaining 950 miles of their 1,550-mile desert frontier was left undefined. The treaty furthermore recognised Saudi sovereignty over the disputed border areas of Najran, Asir and Jizan.

While some Arab observers are sceptical about the outcome of the latest talks, others are more optimism due to recent, serious Arab efforts to overcome the deep splits created by the 1990 Gulf War, in which Yemen incurred Saudi wrath by backing Iraq.

Bahrain denies rights abuses

A leading US-based Human Rights group claims that Bahrain's security practices exacerbate the country's civil unrest, reports **Khaled Dawoud**

In a 109-page report, the Washington-based Human Rights Watch group alleges that the wide- scale violations of civil and political rights in Bahrain have been a major factor in the Gulf state's unrest, now in its third year. Bahrain has denied the allegations.

The report charged that "the contention of the government of Bahrain that the civil unrest in the Gulf state can be wholly ascribed to Iranian sponsored 'terrorism' lacked credibility."

"We found two categories of violations," says Joe Stork, advocacy director of Human Rights Watch — Middle East. "The first, relating to law enforcement and administration of justice, includes arbitrary detention, physical abuse of detainees and special security courts that deny elementary due process rights. The second category covers basic political rights such as the freedom to speak out and hold meetings, form political parties and criticise government policies. Bahrainis risk arrest and physical abuse, and even exile, for demanding that the government abide by the 1973 constitution."

Bahrain's Sunni ruling family, headed by Emir Issa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa, dissolved the country's democratically-elected parliament in 1975, when opposition groups tried to curb the emir's powers and resisted the establishment of a US military base in the Gulf island nation.

Since then, Bahraini opposition figures have been pressing for the restoration of the elected parliament and the constitution. In late 1994, riots broke out in Bahrain as the government rounded up opposition figures, mostly from the disadvantaged Shi'ite majority.

The Bahraini opposition in exile dismiss government allegations that they are financed by Iran and say that their demands are democratic and that their ranks include Sunni as well as Shi'ite Muslims.

The human rights report says that the government of Bahrain is unique in the practice of expelling its own citizens. At least 500 Bahrainis and their families have been expelled for opposing the regime, the report claims It calls upon the Al-Khalifa family to "announce that all Bahrainis living in exile are free to return."

The report is critical of US policies toward human rights abuses in Bahrain. "Washington's silence in the face of flagrant human rights violations by its Gulf allies is inevitably read as tacit acceptance," says Kenneth Roth, executive director of the human rights group.

"The absence of any public reproach to Bahrain for its shameful policies stands in disappointing contrast to the Clinton administration's lofty pronouncements about human rights and democracy in general," Roth adds.

The report calls upon the US and British governments "to use their close and long-standing military and political ties with Bahrain to press the ruling Al-Khalifa family publicly to end abusive practices that are recurrent, systematic and matters of state policy."

The two Western countries, urges the report, should "take steps that will make it clear to the government of Bahrain that persistent human rights violations will affect negatively the depth and quality of overall relations, including military and security relations."

The Bahraini government has denied that it sanctions torture or other forms of physical abuse mentioned in the report. "The allegations made against Bahrain originate from a very small, but skillful group of fundamentalist zealots and extremists," Bahrain's ambassador to Washington, Mohamed Abdel-Ghaffar, said in a letter to Human Rights Watch.

A Bahraini official was cited by the official news agency as saying, "We respect this organisation, its good intentions and its role in defending human rights. But we believe that the sources which the group based its report on were not honest and have intentionally fabricated stories in order to serve their political purposes."

The unnamed Bahraini official called upon the US-based human rights group to be "more objective and to check its information. They should not listen to those groups who adopt violence and terrorism to reach their goals."

Early this month, Bahraini authorities deported a German correspondent for quoting a report by a London-based opposition group claiming that the Bahraini authorities were considering shelling the Shi'ite villages believed to house opposition activists. The government dismissed the report as untrue and said the reporter should have contacted authorities first before publishing such allegations.

Gulf War poison

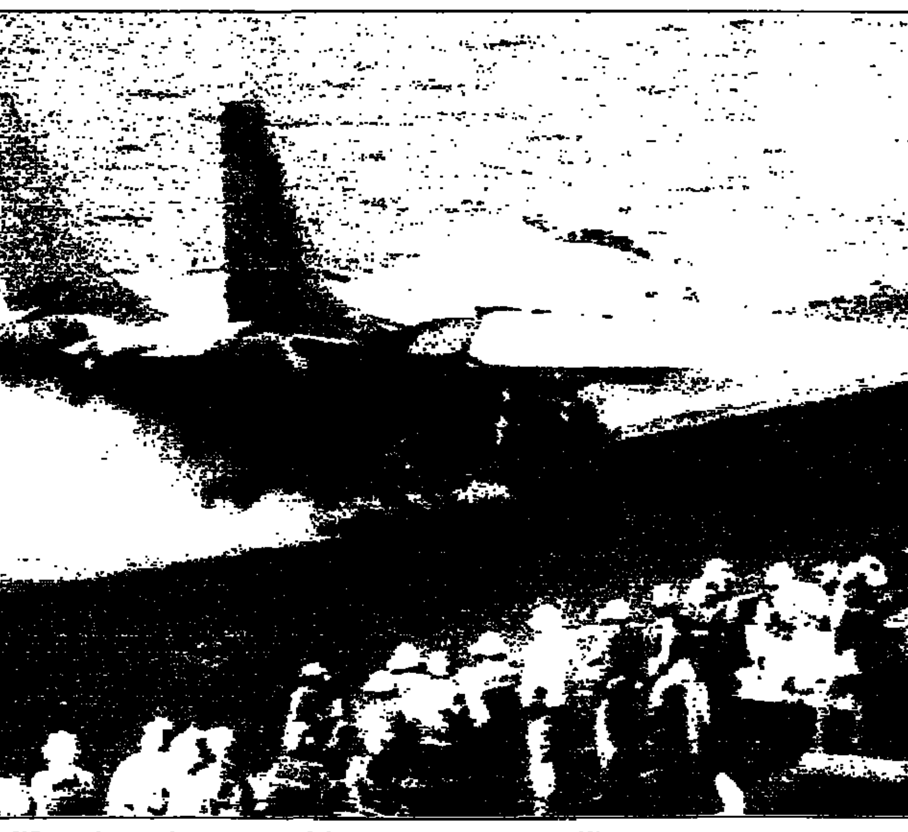
The precise causes of the "Gulf War Syndrome" afflicting thousands of US troops and Iraqis following Operation Desert Storm in 1991 are coming to light, reports **Faiza Rady**. And Iraqi chemical weapons are not entirely to blame

The number of US veterans exposed to harmful nerve gas during the 1991 Allied War against Iraq may come close to 100,000, said the Pentagon last week.

The US Department of Defense (DOD) announced that "98,910 service members were in an area generally south of Khamisiyah [a village about 340 kilometres south-east of Baghdad], and were possibly exposed to a very low level of nerve agent vapourised during the weapons destruction."

Khamisiyah was the location of an Iraqi munitions site destroyed by American troops during the Gulf War. According to American intelligence sources, US army forces demolished the site by setting off two very large explosions, the first on 4 March 1991 and the second on 10 March. Moreover, demolition operations continued in the Khamisiyah area throughout April.

Although the Pentagon at the time consistently denied that the demolition had caused any hazardous chemical gas leakage — emphasising that "there were no reports of verified chemical agent detection" — a UN-sponsored investigation later verified that leakage had indeed occurred. The United Nations Special Commission on Iraqi disarmament (UNSCOM) inspectors found three sites in the Khamisiyah vicinity that had contained chemical weapons and identified debris characteristic of chemical munitions.



A US warplane on its way to bomb Iraq during the 1991 Gulf War (photo: Reuters)

Faced with conclusive evidence, the Pentagon had to retract its earlier statements and confirmed on 21 June 1996 that "US soldiers from the 37th Engineer Battalion destroyed ammunition bunkers... and it now appears that one of these destroyed bunkers contained chemical weapons."

For years, the Pentagon denied that US troops had been exposed to hazardous levels of gas emission — although Gulf War veterans have suffered from fatigue, loss of hair and memory, as well as cardiac and intestinal complaints since 1991. The *International Herald Tribune* reported on 11 June 1993 that the veterans believed these symptoms to be "caused by contact with *contaminated* products." For lack — or fear — of a more specific and hence revealing definition, such illnesses were then generically referred to as the "Gulf War Syndrome".

Responding to increasing political pressure to investigate the possible causes of the outbreak, President Bill Clinton finally ordered the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to re-examine relevant data in March 1995. Consequently, the CIA released a computer-designed model tracing the route of the poisonous chemicals in the Khamisiyah area over a 480km radius.

"Experts hypothesised that a cloud of vapourised nerve agent, formed when weapons were destroyed, would have been carried by prevailing winds over a large area," stated a DOD report. Early studies, released last year, estimated that only 400 soldiers may have been exposed. Those first estimates have since risen to 5,000, then 20,000, to last Thursday's estimates of 99,000. Moreover, the Pentagon also revealed that an unknown number of allied Egyptian and Syrian soldiers, stationed in the vicinity of Khamisiyah, may have been affected.

Although US servicemen were exposed to nerve gas doses higher than the 0.01296 milligrams level allowed by the US Centre for Disease Control, the Pentagon continued to maintain that there was no real cause for alarm. Yet Pentagon officials had to admit that they were in no position to assess real health damage since information on the long-term impact of low exposures to chemical weapons remains limited.

Another less publicised probable cause of Gulf War Syndrome is the Pentagon's use of radioactive contaminated missiles in Iraq. Such missiles contain depleted uranium (DU), a substance composed of the radioactive isotope U238 (an unstable form of atoms). When used in missile production, DU is mixed with titanium, a very hard, light metallic element common to steel manufacturing processes. The major tactical advantage of this alloy is its low aerodynamic resistance, which allows DU missiles to travel at five times the speed of sound. DU is also highly flammable: when exposed to the increased heat of collision, it burns immediately. DU missiles are unquestionably devastating weapons of mass destruction.

In a January 1993 report entitled *Operation Desert Storm: army not adequately prepared to deal with depleted uranium contamination*, the General Accounting Office, a congressional "watchdog" group, disclosed that the army had returned 29 contaminated tanks to US territory, exposing 35 soldiers to dangerous levels of radiation. Subjected to increasing pressure and faced with an outbreak of supposedly mysterious "Gulf War Syndrome" cases, the Pentagon was forced to admit that it had used DU weapons without enforcing adequate health and safety standards.

William Arkin, president of the Washington-based Institute of Science and International Security, estimates that throughout the offensive the US dropped some 300 tons of DU on Iraq and Kuwait. And a 1991 British Atomic Energy Control Authority report stated that the areas heavily bombed by DU missiles tested above the acceptable radiation level and have become environmentally hazardous to the population. The greatest health risks actually occurred when the projectiles hit and set tanks on fire, releasing the radioactive particles which are known to damage kidney and lung tissues.

In the aftermath of the war, Iraqi physicians were alarmed by the high ratio of hospitalised children suffering from hair loss, bleeding and abdominal distention caused by kidney and liver malfunctions. They also noted a marked increase in the number of children born with birth defects, and an increase in cancer and leukemia patients coming mostly from the southern provinces. As the incidence of such cases took on epidemic proportions over the years, the physicians directly linked the outbreak to the dumping of DU weapons over Iraq.

As a result, the Iraqi UN mission addressed a formal complaint to the International Red Cross Committee in January 1995, protesting the use of DU weapons.

The report documented a two-fold increase in the incidence of epidemic vertigo, along with many cases of an undiagnosed disease characterised by blindness, fits of severe headache and numbness. Initial reports of such cases were made about six months after the end of the war. The report also claimed an increase in the daily reports of leukemia cases from two to three in 1991, to 10 to 15 in 1994; and an increase in the incidence of juvenile diabetes — attributed to the psychological effects of exposure to prolonged bombings.

The American bombing of Iraq constitutes a unique phenomenon in the annals of modern warfare. "In 42 days of war, US bombers alone made 110,000 aerial sorties — that is one every 30 seconds — dropping the equivalent of 7.5 Hiroshimas, 88,500 tons of explosives," wrote former US Attorney General Ramsey Clark, describing the onslaught as "a new form of violence that hadn't been experienced on this planet".



Philippino nuns demonstrate against the IMF-inspired liberalisation and economic deregulation policies of President Ramos (photo:AFP)

Russia's clash of the churches

Tensions between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church have taken an ugly turn, writes *Abdel-Malik Khalil* from Moscow

A bill restricting the activities of so-called minority religions in the Russian Federation has exacerbated tensions between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church. The two historical rivals have been at odds and have divided the Slavic peoples of Eastern and Central Europe since Christianity was first introduced into the region by Byzantine missionaries in the seventh century.

Poland, Lithuania, Croatia, Slovenia and Slovakia have historically been overwhelmingly Roman Catholic. The populations of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia and Estonia are equally divided between Catholics and Protestants. Russia, for its part, has historically been the bastion of Orthodoxy in the region. Romania, Serbia and Bulgaria have long had independent national Orthodox churches closely allied to the Russian Orthodox Church while the Ukraine has been a battleground for several competing faiths. Western Ukraine is predominantly Catholic and anti-Russian and Eastern Ukraine has historically been very pro-Moscow and overwhelmingly Orthodox.

Russian Orthodoxy was officially declared the state religion of the Keivan Rus — the first organised Russian state — in 988AD. At first, the Russian Church was administered directly from Constantinople. But when the city fell to the Ottoman Turks, Russian Christians reunited with the Roman Catholic Church in 1439. The union soon broke up and the two churches have been bitter enemies ever since.

Pope John Paul II, the head of the Roman Catholic Church, warned that "the newly introduced Russian bill would constitute a real threat to the pastoral activities of the Roman Catholic Church in Russia and to its very survival." The United States and other Western powers have also been very critical of the new bill. The US Senate voted overwhelmingly to cut over $200 million in US aid if the bill becomes law. But relations between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Kremlin are not that smooth either.

According to Russian presidential spokesman Sergei Yastrzhembsky, the new bill declares Orthodox Christianity as "an inalienable part of Russian history." The Russian Orthodox Church claims over 80 million followers — about half of Russia's total population. Even though relations between the Orthodox Church and the Kremlin were frosty during the days of Communist rule in Russia, the Russian Orthodox Church has forged warmer ties with the national government and the Moscow city government since the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991.

The ties between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Yeltsin administration have been put to a test by Yeltsin's rejection last week of the bill approved by parliament and strongly pushed for by the Church. The bill aims at restricting "non-traditional" religions including the Roman Catholic Church and a host of Western evangelical churches and religious cults. Patriarch Alexy II, head of the Russian Orthodox Church, strongly backed Yeltsin's re-election bid last summer. Barely a year after, the two are arch-enemies.

At stake is the survival of the Russian Orthodox Church, the bill's supporters say. The Orthodox Church suffered persecution of some of its followers under the Communists and now in the post-Communist era has had to suffer the onslaught of Western evangelical churches and strange cults that are winning new followers every day. Yeltsin and his supporters counter that if Russia is to be accepted as a functional Western democracy and win the respect of the world, it must allow for the complete freedom of religious practice. Russia is not a theocracy, Yeltsin argued.

"A democratic state cannot encroach upon the interests of minorities for whatever seemingly noble motives," a furious Yeltsin retorted in a widely publicised nationwide radio address last Friday. Yeltsin insisted that the proposed bill violates Russia's international obligations, human rights and freedoms. "I cannot sign this law in such a form as was adopted by the *Duma* [the lower house of the Russian Parliament]," Yeltsin admonished the angry Patriarch. "The law needs significant changes," he added.

Yeltsin refused to give his approval to the law earlier this week, calling it an unconstitutional threat to religious freedom in Russia. His detractors were furious and accused him of "selling out to the Americans" and of being an "American stooge".

"It is a difficult decision. The law was supported by the majority of the State Duma deputies, the Russian Orthodox churches and other groups," Yeltsin confessed in the radio broadcast. "I'm convinced that time will soon provide fresh evidence of strong, deep and sincere relations between the president and the Russian Orthodox Church," Yastrzhembsky told reporters in Moscow over the weekend.

The bill, if signed into law, will bring special standing to the Russian Orthodox Church, recognising its great contribution and unique heritage in shaping Russian history and culture. The bill also pledges to respect the cultural and religious specificity of four religious categories: Islam, Buddhism, Judaism and the many tribal and shamanistic religions of the indigenous people of Siberia and the far-flung and remote areas of the Russian Federation.

"We live in Russia, where most people are Orthodox Christians," Russia's chief rabbi, Adolf Shayevich, told reporters in Moscow recently. "Why not say that openly?" he asked. Muslim and Jewish religious leaders in Russia do not feel threatened by the proposed new bill. However, Roman Catholics, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints, Protestants of the Lutheran Church, Evangelical Born Again Christians and members of the Aum Shiri Kyu group feel particularly targeted.

America's African stepchildren?

Populism, not pluralism, appears to be the order of the day in Africa, writes Gamal Nkrumah

"We are not America's stepchild," said Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, former Liberian finance minister and current head of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), during her presidential campaign in last week's Liberian elections.

The United States created Liberia — Africa's first independent nation — and then proceeded to nurture and sustain Liberian dependency on America. Liberia was free only in name. In the 10 years before a vicious civil war began tearing the country apart, Liberia's corrupt establishment was bolstered by $500 million in US aid. While corrupt African officials are an important source for inquiry, so are those who bribe African officials in the first place. In fact, the US now has laws incriminating American officials and businessmen who bribe officials abroad.

But as Johnson-Sirleaf suggested, Africa is moving on. Charles Ghankay Dahkpanah Taylor and his National Patriotic Party (NPP) won over 75 per cent of the valid votes tabulated in the 19 July Liberian presidential and parliamentary elections. "I will not be a wicked president. But I have no intention of being a weak president," he said immediately after learning of his victory.

From the West's point of view, Taylor has a history of a maverick foreign policy. He has flirted in the past with Libya's Muammar Gaddafi. And although he has somewhat distanced himself politically from Tripoli of late, he still maintains close business connections in Libya. This, and his virulent anti-American rhetoric, have not endeared him to Washington. Ironically, Taylor now occupies the Israeli-constructed Presidential Executive Mansion in Monrovia, the Liberian capital. Such foreign dealings on the part of African leaders have rankled the West.

Economic interests determine populist African leaders' foreign policy directives. Taylor recently opened a Liberian Embassy in Taipei, even though Liberia's current provisional ruling Council of State recognises Beijing. It is rumoured in Monrovia that Taiwan footed the bill for the elections. Taylor visited Taiwan in February and announced that Taiwan is to help reconstruct Liberia's war-ravaged roads and infrastructure. However, Taylor dismissed suggestions that Taiwan is to give $500 million in economic aid to Liberia.

Former US President Jimmy Carter led a 40-member international team to observe the Liberian elections. At the conclusion of the elections, he gave his analysis of the underlying problem: "It was obvious that inadequate voter education was prevalent prior to the election".

Carter's insinuation reflects his and other Westerners' presumptions about the type of African leader an "adequately educated voter" would elect. Yet turnout for the Liberian poll was estimated at 85 per cent. This suggests that Carter's vision for Africa is different from that of most Africans. Given that he has set his eyes on a Nobel peace prize, at least in part for his mediation efforts in half a dozen trouble spots across Africa, this is a topic of concern for Africa's future.

The Liberian election, the first since 1985, followed seven years of a vicious civil war triggered by Taylor's 1989 assault against the Samuel Doe dictatorship. Doe was executed in 1990, but the war continued among several different ethnically-based factions until Taylor and the various tribal warlords signed a peace deal last year that set the stage for the 19 July elections.

Taylor made good on his populist pre-election promise to break out of the old tribal boundaries of Liberian politics. He is partly of Americo-Liberian descent, but also traces his roots to indigenous African ancestry. Americo-Liberians, descendants of former US slaves, ruled the country for 133 years until Doe came to power. Ironically, the former slaves instituted a form of forced labour on the indigenous population.

The Liberian elections presaged the tone of the Fourth African-African American Summit, which was held in Harare 21-25 July. The summit brought together over 7,000 business leaders, politicians, academics and representatives of over 300 American and European companies and 25 African heads of state. A populist spirit dominated, as President Laurent Désiré Kabila of the Democratic Republic of the Congo stole the show.

Likewise, eight African leaders rallied behind Kabila at a one-day summit in Kinshasa last Sunday, backing his call that a UN investigation into massacres in the former Zaire be extended farther back than the seven-month uprising that brought him to power. In their final communiqué, the heads of state of Uganda, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Namibia, Mozambique, Eritrea, and Central African Republic "noted with dismay" what they termed a campaign of vilification against Kabila.

The question of the hour is: are Africa's new populist leaders America's stepchildren? Are Uganda's Yoweri Museveni, Rwanda's Paul Kagame, Eritrea's Isaias Aferworki handpicked by America? In Liberia the people voted overwhelmingly for Taylor, which is symbolic of a widening support in Africa for populist leaders.

This burst of populism is salubrious. Historically in Africa, populist regimes have tended to strengthen national unity and promote pan-African unity. Meanwhile, Western-style pluralist democracy has been strongly associated with tribalism and ethnic conflict. Whether this is due to Carter's "inadequate voter education" theory is a matter of conjecture.

This new development of post-Cold War populist African leaders has sent frissons of unease throughout the Western world — both left and right. The rightists lament the demise of African dictators like Mobutu Sese Seku who were invaluable allies in the Cold War days. Liberals and leftists in Europe and America are unhappy with what they see as a non-democratic and authoritarian tendency in Africa's new populist leaders. But the polls prove that the populist strongmen are actually popular, and this means the West will have to revolutionise the way it views and interacts with the emerging populist-led Africa.

Both Kabila and Taylor represent the kind of populist leader that the West finds difficult to deal with. Kabila rejected a team dispatched by the UN Human Rights Commission and accused the proposed team leader, Roberto Garreton of Chile, of being biased against his regime. The UN Human Rights Commission set up the investigation to look into allegations that Kabila's fighters or their Rwandan Tutsi and Banyamulenge (Congolese Tutsi) allies hunted down and butchered Rwandan Hutu refugees during their sweep across Zaire. UN relief officials estimate that as many as 200,000 Hutus are missing in the former Zaire, but Kabila dismisses talk of massacres. Kabila insists that the violations took place in eastern Congo, formerly Zaire, around March 1993 — long before his troops overran the area.

It is clear that someone incited genocide and someone carried out the systematic murder of the Tutsi people of Rwanda and their Hutu compatriots who refused to go along with the mass slaughter of defenseless Tutsis. Last week, the UN war crimes tribunal for Rwanda confirmed that seven ethnic Hutu leaders were arrested in the Kenyan capital Nairobi, including former Rwandan Prime Minister Jean Kambanda, former Minister of Family Welfare and the Advancement of Women Pauline Nyiramasuhuku, and the former head of Radio Mille Collines. Twelve Hutu suspects are already on trial in the northern Tanzanian city of Arusha. Kabila is doing all he can to avoid being implicated in these kinds of proceedings.

Western observers believe that the accession to power of the likes of Taylor and Kabila cloud the outlook for continuing democratisation on the continent. It does not matter whether these leaders attained power by the bullet or the ballot box: they seem too impatient with their local rivals and their militiamen look a bit too trigger-happy. But Taylors' and Kabila's men are disciplined. Like Museveni's, Kagame's and Aferworki's, they are battle-hardened fighters. Mobutu's men were paid to cow their own people. But the new African populists' men were welcomed as saviours in every town they liberated.

Many in the West would prefer to see the Taylors and the Kabilas quietly sidelined. But they seem destined to take Africa well into the 21st century at a time when Africa needs strong leadership: weak Weimar-style leadership in a precarious democratic climate will ultimately result in political chaos.

A welcome gust of populism is blowing through Africa. It is reminiscent of the heady days of the 1960s. With widespread poverty and rampant social ills it is impossible to institute Western-style democracy overnight. The last embers of brute dictatorship are now a dying flicker. Populism is the immediate answer to Africa's political woes. This is an argument that an increasing number of Africans are accepting — the polls proved it in Liberia. There is a better chance of reconstructing African economies and building the continent's run down infrastructure with strong populist leaders in charge. Weak Western-style pluralist democracies will only exacerbate ethnic tensions and tribal divisions.

The other side of the mirror

The execution of Joseph O'Dell in Virginia, despite a massive international appeal to spare his life, triggered off a debate about the death sentence, writes Julia Wright

Joseph O'Dell was executed as scheduled on 23 July at ten minutes past nine pm. According to official reports, he took six minutes to succumb to the lethal injection. Rather than face his last minutes in a drugged state, he had refused his last meal. Traditionally American deathrow prisoners can choose their last menu and one remembers the last words of Ricky Rector who was executed after becoming mentally handicapped following a failed suicide attempt: "When the execution is over, could you please take me back to my cell so that I may finish my dessert?"

For deathrow prisoners in the United States, the rite of passage from prison life to state-dealt death is minutely detailed and chronicled much in the style of a military operation. If a stay is given at the last minute there are terse orders to "Stand Down". But there was no "Stand Down" for Joseph O'Dell in spite of Pope John Paul II's appeal to President Bill Clinton and governor George Allen of Virginia, in spite of an impassioned plea by Mother Theresa, of several resolutions voted by the European Parliament and last minute interventions by foreign dignitaries rejected by the US Supreme Court.

Beyond expressing their fundamental opposition to a death penalty which, in its application, runs counter to many international law conventions — these interventions were based on four instances of prosecutorial misconduct.

First, O'Dell was convicted on the testimony of a prosecution witness who has since recanted. Second, O'Dell was unable to benefit from a new legal standard set by the US Supreme Court in 1994 — if a defendant is described, as was the case for O'Dell, as a "Future Threat to Society", the jury had a right to be told that he would never leave prison if they spared his life. O'Dell's jury had not been told. However, the US Supreme Court decided this moral standard could not be made retroactive just to save a life. Three, DNA tests of blood found on O'Dell's clothes contradicted earlier serology tests ordered by the prosecution. Finally, O'Dell received such poor legal representation at the trial that he had to represent himself.

O'Dell's execution therefore raises a key question: As the deadlines for appeals are shortened and the rhythm of executions accelerates in the wake of the 1996 "Effective Death Penalty Act", how many innocents are executed in the US today? An alarming report released on 15 July by the death penalty information centre in Washington DC offers some chilling answers.

According to the report, there have been approximately 6,000 people sentenced to death in the US since 1973.

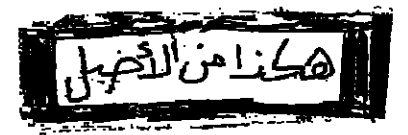
During that period, 69 deathrow prisoners were found *in extremis* to be innocent — and released. But this appalling ratio of 1 out of every 100 prisoners may be only the tip of the iceberg: "The error rate is almost certainly higher. Even when the evidence of innocence is available and compelling it takes an extraordinary effort to extricate someone from a death sentence. What is most frightening about the centre's report is what it could not provide: An account of those miserable cases, no one knows how many, in which both innocence and the inmate were buried in the name of justice."

Although official, state-conducted opinion polls still claim that 75 per cent of Americans support the death penalty, as soon as the questions are phrased differently and viable alternatives to the death penalty are listed, it is found that a majority of Americans (including many police chiefs) do not rank capital punishment as a priority. This shift in the perception of the death penalty as a "Quick Fix" is reflected at three levels pointing to a rising momentum against the unfair administration of death.

First, in February 1997 a majority resolution in favour of a moratorium of the death penalty was voted by the prestigious and conservative American Barristers' Association — the biggest and most influential in the country. Second, a stark 1996 report by the Commission of International Jurists based in Geneva issued the double conclusion that the US is the last major Western Democracy to use capital punishment and that its administration is racist, anti-poor and arbitrary.

Finally, inside the US, the battery of legal challenges opposing the 1996 "Effective Death Penalty Act" indicates that America's civil libertarians will not allow the sacred principle of Habeas Corpus, as enshrined for 200 years in the American constitution, to be eroded any further for the sake of political and economic expediency.

Trapped by a death sentence which presents many more prosecutorial flaws than even O'Dell's, the internationally known African-American journalist and writer Mumia Abu-Jamal recently wrote from Pennsylvania's deathrow: "One wonders, what is the relationship between the crime rate and the incarceration rate? The answer seems to be: very little. The nation's incarceration rate appears to be driven not by the crime rate, but by the needs of the prison-industrial complex. The poor, the young and the black are unwitting fodder to feed the machine. Gone is even the shallowest pretense of rehabilitation, with prison's economic imperative assuming its brute mastery of the game of life and death". Mumia Abu-Jamal has been protesting his innocence for the past 15 years.



هكذا من الأصل

Waiting for the big investor

The government has stepped up efforts to find strategic investors for state-run industries. But are there too many obstacles in the way? **Gamal Essam El-Din** investigates

The success of the privatisation programme rests largely on the government's ability to secure strategic investors for public sector industries slated for sale, senior government officials say.

Their comments, voiced first following the conclusion of an IMF agreement with Egypt last October, have been repeated numerous times since then. Each time, they have been keen to stress that privatisation does not just mean selling companies on the stock market.

Rather, privatisation also means bracing up Egyptian industries for the increased competition they will face as the transition from public to private is completed.

In this connection, time is of the essence, argues Amin Mubarak, chairman of the People's Assembly's Industry Committee. The 10-year transitional period afforded to developing countries by the International Multilateral Free Trade Agreement (MFTA), previously known as GATT, is scheduled to end in the year 2005, he said.

"This means that many of Egypt's state industries, currently burdened with a host of problems, will soon face stiff competition resulting from the influx of high-quality, less-expensive foreign products," stated the committee chairman.

The textile industry, he argued, is but one example. This over-staffed industry, which operates with out-dated machinery, has accumulated losses of LE3.5 billion to date.

Mubarak sees strategic investors, capable of streamlining production and making structural and managerial reforms, as a way out of this quagmire confronting the country's troubled and debt-ridden industrial sectors.

"Strategic investors are now the sole available option if we are really serious about making the Egyptian industry more competitive, export-oriented and profitable in a short time," he said.

But most of the government's efforts to sell a number of industries to strategic foreign investors have not met with much success lately.

Although the government announced last October that a list of 30 state industrial companies would be sold to strategic investors, only three have been sold. This brings the total number of companies sold to strategic investors over the past four years to six.

These companies, sold at a total price of LE933 million, include the Egyptian Bottling Company (Pepsi Cola), El-Nasr Bottling Company (Coca Cola), El-Nasr Steamboilers, El-Nasr Company for Electric Transformers (El-Macu), El-Nasr Utilities and Installation Company and Al-Ahram Beverages Company.

The government, however, is not discouraged. Fouad Abdel-Wahab, head of the Public Enterprise Office (PEO), announced last week that full and detailed statements about 50 public sector industrial companies are currently ready to be submitted to international companies whose expertise lies in promoting and marketing these companies to strategic investors.

But industrial and economic experts interviewed by *Al-Ahram Weekly*, citing a number of reasons for the failure of past efforts, were not optimistic that the government would succeed in realising its goal.

Topping this list of reasons, said Amin Mubarak, is the government's lack of experience in evaluating public industries slated for sale to strategic investors. Privatisation officials have already faced a barrage of criticism from parliament and the press as a result of its previous sales to strategic investors.

Public Sector Minister Atef Ebeid was accused during a parliamentary interpellation this year of selling the Steam boilers Company at an undervalued price. He will also face another interpellation in the new parliamentary session over alleged financial malpractice in the sale of El-Nasr Electric Transformers Company (El-Macu). He is currently facing the same charges concerning the sale of Al-Ahram Beverages Company.

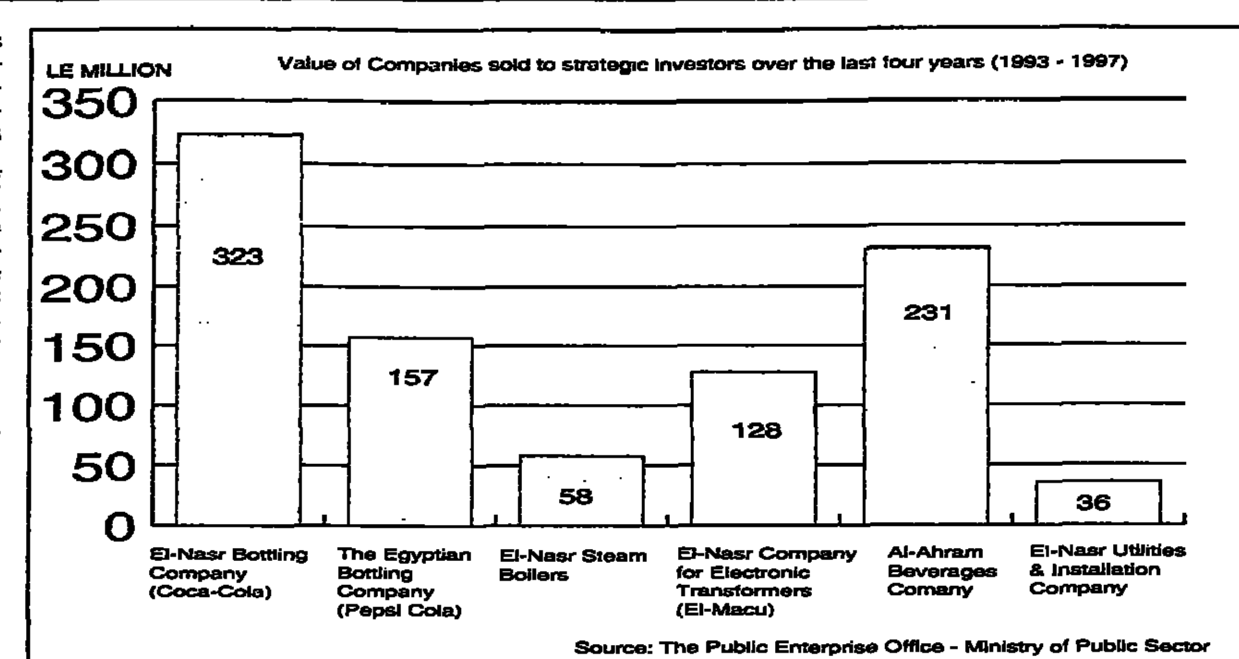
Moreover, the fact that a number of senior public sector industrial officials, notably the former chairman of the Holding Company for Engineering Industries, Abdel-Wahab El-Habbak, were prosecuted for embezzlement of public company funds gives the government more food for thought before taking a final decision on any new sales to strategic investors.

Mustafa El-Said, chairman of the parliament's Economic Committee, agrees that the criticism levelled against the government has prompted it to be "more hesitant about some offers." Critics have argued that the government is selling Egypt at a discount to foreigners. These allegations, he said, have resulted in the government giving Arabs and Egyptians priority in new sales.

For example, the ministerial privatisation committee (MPC) turned down a LE600 million bid from France's Lafarge Coppe — a leading French cement plant operator — to buy a large stake of Al-Ameriya Cement Company. The committee also leaned in favour of Ahmed El-Zayat, an Egyptian-American investor, in the sale of Al-Ahram Beverages Company, preferring his bid to one offered by a rival Danish company specialised in beer production.

El-Said emphasised that the government has to concentrate on foreign investors in the next stage simply because Egyptian businessmen neither have the resources to meet the government's expectations nor the interest and expertise needed to run large state industries.

"Strategic foreign investors are the only ones who have the money and know-how to renovate the country's public sector industrial enterprises," he said.



Mubarak is also quick to cite several other reasons that discourage strategic investors from coming to Egypt. One is the fact that nearly 90 of the 274 companies listed for sale are suffering losses resulting from outdated machinery, poor management, copious quantities of unsold inventory, poor quality products, a lack of profit motive and the failure to meet delivery schedules.

These companies, added Mubarak, also shoulder huge debts of roughly LE60 billion to banks.

But Ebeid argues that the government has so far managed to improve the financial condition of nearly 120 companies, and only six to eight companies fall in the category of a lost cause.

"These companies are massively overstaffed," Ebeid confessed during a recent session of the People's Assembly Industry Committee. "And this is a deterrent to luring strategic investors."

With this in mind, the government has begun to trim away the excess fat — reducing the number of public sector industry employees from 1.01 million in 1995 to 908,000 by mid-1997.

While this may be a step in the right direction, potential investors are looking for more. A number of Italian investors who set their sights on the Helwan and Daqahliya spinning and weaving companies have stipulated that the companies' employees need to be cut by roughly 40 per cent as a precondition to the purchase.

Ticking off the list of obstacles, Mubarak also cites the government's insistence on keeping the upper hand in a number of strategic industries as a turn-off to investors.

"This policy, which keeps industries such as tobacco, aluminium, flour mills, iron and steel, sugar and telecommunications in the government's hand, tells the world that socialist policies are still alive in Egypt," he stated.

El-Said offers a different opinion on the matter, arguing that the government should hold onto some of the more sensitive industries.

"I don't think that this is reason enough to prevent interested strategic investors from coming to Egypt," noted El-Said. "There are no countries that are 100 per cent free market."

He adds: "I think that at this stage, the government should concentrate on turning these companies around financially, and this would kindle the interest of strategic investors in Egyptian industries."

Opening all doors

PRIME Minster Kamal El-Ganzouri has stated that there are no restrictions on any investment activities in Egypt and that the government will continue to provide incentives and facilities for all investments undertaken in "ambitious developmental projects".

Concerning problems which have arisen because of the new agricultural land tenancy law, Ganzouri explained that mediation committees have been able to reach solutions acceptable to all parties. The law is scheduled to go into effect in October.

He added that the government will participate in providing alternative housing to agricultural tenants who might have to leave their homes under the new law.

The Social Fund for Development (SDF) and the Ministry for Rural Development would also help in resolving the few cases left unsetteled by the mediation committees, said Ganzouri.

"The government is an impartial party whose aim is to protect the interests of landowners and tenants alike," said Ganzouri.

Airport bids invited

THE EGYPTIAN Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) last week announced that it was re-offering private investors three airports, under a build, operate and transfer (BOT) agreement.

The airports in question will be located in Al-Alamein, on the Egyptian northern coast, and in the Bahariya and Farafra oases in the Western Desert.

An advertisement placed by the CAA said that purchase of the prospectus will be open until the end of this month, and that bidding for the three airports will begin on 30 December 1997.

The state had invited private sector investors early this year to build airports in these three locations, but its offer was met with a lack of interest.

In the meantime, the CAA is currently negotiating with Mohamed Abdel-Mohsen Kharafi and Sons, the Kuwaiti company chosen to build, operate and transfer the Marsa Alam airport on the Red Sea coast.

The People's Assembly had agreed last January to allow private sector investors to take part in the establishment of infrastructural projects, such as the construction, administration and operation of airports. The decision fell within the framework of efforts to grant the private sector a greater role in building up the Egyptian economy.

The Egyptian government has offered the private sector BOT roads, and is considering inviting private investors to build power stations.

Biotech ban under scrutiny

A decree issued last week by the Egyptian government banning the importation of genetically-altered crops was suspended for three months. **Gihan Shahine** reports

Egyptian government officials have announced a three-month delay before the implementation of the ban imposed by the Ministry of Health on the importation of genetically engineered cereals.

The delay, according to ministry officials, will give the government time to further study the issue — and the decision, which was issued at the beginning of July.

The ban stipulated that all shipments of cereals or dry legumes must be accompanied by a certificate assuring that no transgenic process has been used in the cultivation of the crop.

The US Department of Agriculture, however, did not react well to the ban, and rejected the idea of presenting a certificate, arguing that it would mean the exclusion of some products from the international market. Genetically engineered crops, USDA officials stated, were perfectly safe for human consumption.

Not everyone, most of all Egypt, is convinced by this argument. The European Union last month adopted a similar ban. According to Reuter reports, the EU approved rules requiring that companies label genetically-modified products.

Similarly, Egypt's Ministry of Agriculture last week received a faxed report dealing with the current tension between the EU and the US over the European restriction and the demands by some activists that genetically-enhanced foods be handled, stored and sold separately from their naturally-grown counterparts.

Reuter added that protests against genetically modified crops, particularly soybeans, erupted in Europe earlier this year, and that some traders claim the Egyptian government was scared by the demonstrations.

The powerful environmental lobby group, Greenpeace International, who welcomed the Egyptian decree, was also quoted by the British news agency as saying that the Egyptian ban "had put the finger on the urgent need for internationally-binding bio-safety standards."

Greenpeace's Benedik Haerlin also said in a faxed statement to Reuter that "the United States seems to take the position that every state in the world has to accept their estimation that genetically manipulated crops... are safe and acceptable."

The Egyptian Health Ministry's rule about certification, announced roughly a week ago, has triggered a heated debate among officials in the trade and agriculture ministries, independent traders, and scientists.

Ahmed Guweily, the minister of supply and trade, told Egyptian reporters that "he was not informed about the decision." He emphasised, however, that genetic engineering is not used in the cultivation of all grains, citing wheat as but one example.

He added that there is still no proof that genetic engineering of crops is harmful to the health.

Although many Egyptian scientists have been quoted in the Egyptian press as warning against the hazards of genetic engineering, saying that it may lead to cancer, the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) refuted all charges against the application of transgenic in producing crops.

"Genetic engineering is proved to be safe and is used to meet the demand of the day," FAO's Michael Al-Haj said. "I believe that all charges against biotech products are unfounded."

And Minister of Agriculture Youssef Wali declared early this week that the Egyptian government will never let any shipments of foodstuffs that is harmful to the health of humans or animals into the country. He also maintained that genetic engineering is proven safe in most of the cases, citing as an example the use of transgenic process in the manufacture of insulin and the detection of genetically transmitted diseases.

But the Health Ministry's decision remains puzzling to many Egyptian traders. The decree does not specify where the exporters can get certificates from, how to check the reliability of the certificate, in case the exporting company agrees to present one, and what will be done after the three-month grace period if the US companies continue to resist the idea of providing proof that the commodity is not genetically-modified.

The Health Ministry has also been severely criticised for failing to inform major import companies about the decision. These companies include the Egyptian Holding Company for Foodstuff Manufacture and the Authority for Commodity Supply, which handle roughly 90 per cent of Egypt's wheat and grain purchase orders. They claim they found out about the ban through the press.

Officials in these companies have also voiced concern over the fate of transactions concluded just before the issuing of the ban. The Holding Company for Foodstuffs was reported to have struck a deal to import 55,000 tons of wheat at a cost of $150 per ton just two weeks before the ministry imposed the ban. The company has also halted two transactions to purchase 30,000 tons of soy-beans and 30,000 tons of corn. While company officials refused to explain why the transactions were frozen, the opposition newspaper *Al-Wafd* said the decision came in reaction to the Egyptian Health Ministry's decree. The economic newspaper *Al-Alam Al-Youm* said that since the ban was announced, the purchase of grains by retail traders has decreased by 20 per cent. But it was the possibility of wheat being included in the ban that hit the deepest nerve in Egypt. During the period 1996-97, Egypt purchased 2.9 million metric tons of the crop — and annual consumption is about 11 million tons.

Allaying these fears, both US and Egyptian officials stated last week that US wheat imports were not likely to be affected by the ban since the crop is not genetically-modified. Supply Minister Guweily also announced that the ministry was going ahead as planned with wheat imports from various other countries.

In an effort to settle this issue, a committee of representatives from the Ministries of Health, Trade, Agriculture and Scientific Research will be convened to discuss details regarding the ban and to answer some of the numerous questions that have surfaced as a result.

Marker report

GMI dips again

THE GENERAL Market Index followed its lengthy downward trend through the week ending 24 July to settle at 344.32 points. Total market turnover also declined, reaching LE218 million compared to LE272.5 million the week before.

The decline in transactions is partially attributed to a work week shortened to four days as a result of celebration marking the 45 th anniversary of the 23rd of July revolution.

The Nile Ginning Company was the week's star. Trading LE31.82 million in shares, it cornered 14.59 per cent of the overall market transactions, with its stock registering an increase of LE0.25 to close at LE53.25.

Rubex for Plastic Manufacturing also found itself among the winners, its shares recording a 10.25 per cent increase to level off at LE826. This increase was the highest on the market.

On the other hand, Cairo Housing and Development suffered the highest loss, its stocks dropping in value by 11.85 per cent to close at LE15.69.

Economy Minister Youssef Boutros Ghali's statements during the week, however, managed to brighten the picture slightly.

In a two-day seminar held earlier this week, Ghali unveiled a new plan for upgrading the market that will comprise new measures to increase market transparency.

This plan calls for developing ways of displaying and transferring data to employees of the stock market.

Also during the same seminar, Sherif Raafat, the new head of the Egyptian Stock Exchange, pointed out that the market value of Egyptian securities traded through 1996 totaled $14 billion, compared to $1.7 billion in 1990.

Nevertheless, by the end of the trading week, the shares of 62 companies had decreased in value while only 34 registered an increase. The share value of 27 companies remained unchanged.

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Edited by **Ghada Ragab**

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churches
the Russian Orthodox
man Catholic Church
r turn. writes
from Moscow

Julia Wright

Al-Ahram Weekly

It takes more than gestures

Platitudes count for little when it comes to brokering peace, yet they are all that Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu has offered. Now, amid fears that the peace process had all but collapsed, there is renewed hope that Israel and the Palestinians could find *themselves sitting* across from each other within days. Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy met this week with Jordan's King Hussein, and both men walked away confident that peace no longer seemed to be an unattainable goal.

But a measure of confidence between the parties partially restored in all but a matter of days can be destroyed just as quickly. And Israel, with the Palestinians willing to focus on complying with Netanyahu's security demands, must now begin shouldering the burden of responsibility it had sought to shrug off through rhetoric about Arab instigation of violence.

In this light, the US also must begin pulling its weight by impressing on the Israeli premier the need to cease and desist from any and all actions which may undermine the fragile framework for peace that is in the making.

To an extent, Netanyahu has already begun to come to terms with this fact, issuing strong condemnations about a Jerusalem City Council decision to break ground on another settlement in the Arab neighbourhood of Ras Al-Amoud. But this realisation has come only after scores of Palestinians have been injured in clashes with Israeli forces during protests over the Abu Ghneim settlement.

Still, the road to the conclusion of a just and comprehensive peace settlement is yet to be taken. Cosmetic conciliatory gestures will not succeed where repression and strong arm tactics have failed. The agenda of Israeli-Palestinian issues may include tens of items, big and small, but only one will determine whether there will be lasting peace or interminable strife between the two peoples. And that is the Israelis' conceding, once *and for all, the Palestinians inalienable right* to self-determination and independent statehood.

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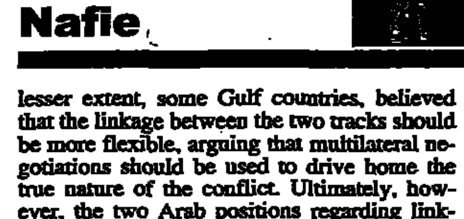
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Doha in the balance

As MENA IV approaches, voices calling for a boycott become more strident, writes Ibrahim Nafie



With the MENA IV conference scheduled for November in Doha, debate in the Arab world over whether to participate is becoming heated.

The origins of this debate date back to the beginning of the peace process. The Madrid conference established two tracks for peacefully settling the Arab-Israeli conflict: the first involved a series of bilateral negotiations with the aim of resolving the core issue of the conflict, the Israeli occupation of Arab land; the second was to foster an agenda for multilateral negotiations in order to promote forms of regional cooperation intended to alleviate tensions and shore up any agreements concluded between Israel and various Arab parties.

The dual-track formula received the full support of participants in Madrid. There remained, however, differences over the linkage between the two tracks. While the US, Israel and some European countries favoured separating the tracks, Arab countries insisted they remain linked.

The US and Israel hold that by keeping the two tracks separate, a breakdown in bilateral negotiations would not impede progress in multilateral negotiations. In fact, they argue, normalisation would provide Israel with a greater incentive to continue with bilateral negotiations. The Arabs, on the other hand, believe that the conflict with Israel is too complex to be handled in this manner and that, as long as the central issue of Israeli occupation of Arab land remains unresolved, normalisation with Israel is out of the question.

Not that the Arab stand was entirely consistent. Syria, Lebanon and the PLO insisted that the two tracks should be fully linked and so boycotted regional multilateral negotiations while Egypt, Saudi Arabia and, to a lesser extent, some Gulf countries, believed that the linkage between the two tracks should be more flexible, arguing that multilateral negotiations should be used to drive home the true nature of the conflict. Ultimately, however, the two Arab positions regarding linkage have the same aim and inter-Arab coordination proved invaluable in the negotiating process following Madrid.

Between 1992 and 1996 each of the five committees established at Madrid held seven series of meetings. In addition the EU was entrusted with sponsoring the World Economic Forum, intended to organise and sponsor a series of international conferences to promote regional economic cooperation. When the Economic Co-operation Committee submitted its agenda to the Forum in Davos, this set into motion the series of MENA conferences.

The third MENA conference, held after Likud's election victory, was dogged by controversy: should it go ahead or be postponed? There was also acrimony over the extent to which it should be linked to the peace process. Egyptian diplomacy was instrumental in affirming the close connection between multilateral and bilateral negotiations. Indeed, Egypt sponsored an expanded Arab summit between 21-23 July 1996, the closing communiqué of which emphasised the link between normalisation and the peace process.

The Middle Eastern framework for economic cooperation espoused by the MENA conferences became the object of considerable criticism. Increasingly it was perceived as an Israeli ploy, with US backing, to create a regional order in which Israel would play the leading role as an intermediary between the industrialised West and the countries of the Middle East, especially the Gulf.

Against this background an alternative formula for regional co-operation was revived. The notion of a mechanism for economic cooperation among Mediterranean basin countries goes back many years. Perhaps the first serious appeal for such a mechanism came in President Mubarak's speech before the Parliamentary Assembly of the European Council in Strasbourg on 20 November 1991 in which he proposed "organising a forum around the Mediterranean that would eventually expand to include all the countries of Europe and the Middle East and that would be a focal point for dialogue and interaction at the governmental and non-governmental levels."

In November 1995 the Barcelona conference for a "European-Mediterranean Partnership" was convened with the aim of investigating ways of gradually merging the countries of the southern Mediterranean into Europe's economic framework.

Numerous reasons have been put forward to explain the impetus behind these moves. Some suggest it is Europe's response to the US domination of the Middle East peace process. Others suggest that it is inspired by European hopes to contain what it fears are forces in the southern Mediterranean that might jeopardise European security. It has also been mooted that Europe and the US are entirely in harmony in this regard and that the Middle Eastern and Mediterranean orders represent two faces of the same coin, both constituting attempts to assimilate Israel into the region. Should this reasoning be true, it will only intensify pressures to boycott the forthcoming MENA IV conference given the manner in which the Likud has consistently blocked the peace process.

The rise of ethnicity

Economic integration at the global level seems to go hand in hand with the rise of ethnicity at the grass-root level. Mohamed Sid-Ahmed comments

A few days ago, I received an invitation from the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies to participate in what they call a *conversazione* to be held next September in Amman, under the patronage of Prince Hassan, on The Christian Arab Today, notably, on the situation of Christians in Lebanon, Egypt and the Holy Land. I have not yet decided whether to accept or decline the invitation, but was struck by the vehemence with which a certain press branded the idea of discussing the topic as 'suspect', thus betraying how sensitive issues of religion and perhaps, more generally, of ethnicity, have become.

Of course, there might be good reasons to be prudent, and I am still inquiring about what exactly the objective of the gathering is. But though I would have preferred discussing the problems touching on the Egyptian Copts in Egypt itself, and not in Lebanon, Cyprus, America or Canada, I am not prepared to condemn the undertaking a priori as a conspiracy. Especially that the issue of ethnicity is not local but is acquiring global dimensions.

Ethnicity is not only a problem of underdeveloped countries, of bloody infighting between hostile African tribes and clans such as the Hutus and the Tutsis in Rwanda, Burundi or the Congo. In Spain last week, over six million people took to the streets to demonstrate against the kidnapping and killing of a 29-year-old town councillor for the ruling Popular Party by the Basque separatist organisation ETA. And despite the hopes raised by Tony Blair's election that a resolution of the Ulster problem was close, the intractability of Protestant-Catholic relations seems insurmountable.

Ethnicity is on the rise everywhere, a counterpoise to globalism and a reaction to the 'global village' syndrome which, by bringing peoples closer together and, thanks to the Information Revolution, enhancing their ability to know each other better, also highlights the contrasts and differences between them. Both phenomena, whether *globalism and global economic integration* from above, or rising ethnicity and growing fragmentation from below, not only reflect the weakening of the sovereign state structure, but contribute to undermining it still further, thus exacerbating feelings of frustration and alienation among minority groups and encouraging them to take matters into their own hands.

The situation has reached a point where a country like France is seeing its traditional confrontation between Left and Right eclipsed by another even more virulent confrontation between those who uphold the republican values launched by the French Revolution and those, headed by Le Pen's Front National who take advantage of growing unemployment to stir up xenophobia against foreigners and advocate a present-day variant of racism, fascism and ethnic confrontation.

I am for ethnicity rather than racism as the key word, if only because it covers a wider variety of phenomena: reinvigorated racism; present-day expressions of the Jewish problem and their relation to traditional anti-Semitism; social, economic and cultural discrimination; the so-called 'clash of civilisations'; and the problems engendered by the growing gap between developing and developed societies. In the context of a shrinking planet, such feelings are exacerbated still further.

Over-sensitivity towards ethnic problems in the Arab world is due to the belief that Israel exploits them to its advantage, by encouraging ethnic tensions within the context of pan-Arabism and supporting minorities whenever possible or pretending to do so. Of course, with peace supplanting war as the frame of reference, and given Israel's success in transferring the most acute contradictions throughout the region into Arab ranks, the Arab world is exposed to still further fragmentation. It is an issue that will continue to *plague us unless we admit to its existence and* address it seriously through open debate.

In a way, the Arab-Israeli conflict is not only the longest-standing expression of acute ethnic conflict in the world, but can also be looked upon as a barometer of how intense problems of ethnicity still remain. It is worthy of note in this *respect that since the creation of Israel, the Jews* have become more privileged than ever before. In the first half of the century, they suffered persecution with no parallel in their whole history; in the second they have enjoyed a privileged status, also without parallel in their whole history. So far, the guilt feelings of the West for allowing the wholesale slaughter of Jews in Holocaust has worked in their favour, but there is no guarantee that this will continue to be the case. Indeed, there are already signs that a backlash might be building up.

One sign is the mixed reaction in the West to the extensive media coverage of the lawsuit brought by a Jewish group against a number of Swiss banks seeking billions of dollars in damages for "stolen or mislaid" Holocaust-era assets of Jewish families. Another is the United Nations General Assembly vote condemning the present Israeli government settlement policy in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, which was adopted with an overwhelming majority, with only three votes against (Israel, the United States and Micronesia) and 14 abstentions. It would seem that Washington's indiscriminate support of Israel is feeding anti-Israeli feelings rather than the opposite.

Because ethnicity comes to the fore whenever feelings of persecution become overpowering, the phenomenon goes hand in hand with the perception of a given group of people that they are being treated as second-class citizens. Nor is this perception necessarily limited to minority groups. For example, colonial rule was largely dependent on local administrations which represented a small minority of the population but which enjoyed unquestionable military, economic and technological superiority. This naturally bred feelings of frustration among the majority.

Israel, the haven of the Jews, is both the product and a source of persecution. In a way, no ethnic body is absolutely homogeneous but carries within it implicit contradictions. That is why the most acute conflicts in Israel are those between the Israelis who believe that Israel's present military, economic and technological superiority is the best guarantee for its survival in future, and *those who believe that Israel's very structure* will remain vulnerable as long as its survival is based on treating the non-Jewish indigenous population of Palestine the way the Jews themselves were once treated in Europe.

The spirit remains

By Naguib Mahfouz

This week is the tenth anniversary of the death of our great writer Tawfiq El-Hakim. When I was presented with the Nobel Prize for literature, I had declared that others were more worthy: Abbas El-Aqqad, Taha Hussein, and Tawfiq El-Hakim. I still believe that they deserved the honour I received.

Yet we seem to have forgotten Tawfiq El-Hakim's great gifts to Arab literature. His appearance on the literary scene was quite a big surprise. Before him, Egypt was accustomed to critics and academics who wrote novels and short stories on the side. That was the case with El-Aqqad and Taha Hussein.

Tawfiq El-Hakim, on the other hand, was primarily an artist; he did not advocate the ideas of a party he belonged to, nor did he produce from within an academic institution.

People of the Cave, for instance, took the Arab cultural scene by storm in the 1930s. I was a university student at the time, and remember getting off the tram on my way to the university to buy the book. El-Aqqad had written about it in glowing terms, which was extremely unusual for him.

In my view, Tawfiq El-Hakim has influenced most literary genres, not only the theatre. He cast a long shadow that influenced all its successors, including my own work.

Based on an interview by Mohamed Salmawy.

The Press This Week

Thugs here and there

Al-Gomhuria: "The latest Netanyahu ploy is a new law consolidating the 1981 law, passed under Menachem Begin, which annexes the Golan to Israel. The new law stipulates that any amendment to the annexation law would require the approval of two thirds of Knesset members rather than a simple majority. This new move confirms Netanyahu's intentions towards Syria. Israel's security claims can hardly disguise that country's ambitions. Israel's unholy alliance of terrorists, rabbis and generals no longer needs to conceal its ambitions. US vetoes and Israeli *bulldozers bolster these ambitions. The Knesset* stiffening of laws renders any talk about the peace process meaningless."
(Kamel Zoheiry, 25 July)

Al-Mussawar: "It is indeed a pity that we talk a lot about the Nile but do not match our words with deeds. We sing for the Nile yet it is only lip-service. Our cultural and moral heritage refers to Egypt as being the gift of the Nile but our treatment of that river verges on the criminal. There are many encroachments on its banks: the Corniche is threatened, high walls conceal the river, and waterfront cafés are everywhere. It is remarkable that Ancient Egyptians believed that on the Day of Judgement they would be asked if they had polluted the Nile. The answer, they believed, could determine their fate in the afterlife. Should we not ask ourselves the same question? Just one simple question. It may not, however, be too late. There is still time to preserve the beauty and sanctity of the Nile."
(Editorial, 25 July)

Al-Wafd: "The heavy blows that Israel is directing at the peace process show that its strategy is to change the peace process into a surrender document in which Palestinians and Arabs give in to Israel's demands and concede its hegemony over the region. In the meantime, the Palestinian leadership is making endless concessions as it chases a mirage of peace. The latest Israeli moves have dashed all hope for a just and comprehensive peace which will uphold Arab rights. It is time to rethink the so-called peace process. The US and the international community should realise that Israel's hard-line, intransigent positions will lead to dire consequences. We have chosen peace as a strategic option but this does not rule out other options."
(Editorial, 26 July)

Akhbar El-Yom: "On the question of thuggery, we should not take things too lightly. The issue concerns the security of the citizen. The truth is that thuggery has spread from the slums to exclusive residential areas. Knives, swords and other offensive weapons have become widespread. Everyone is aware of the phenomenon, and silence will not make it go away. For this reason, we have to discuss the issue and not stick our head in the sand like ostriches. What we are worried about at the moment is that thuggery should turn into organised crime. Thuggery and terrorism are two sides of the same coin. Terrorism has a political goal whereas thuggery has a social goal. The danger, in both cases, is considerable. I believe that it is as vital to uphold social security as it is to maintain political security. So what are we going to do in the face of the new 'Mafia'?"
(Tahany Ibrahim, 26 July)

Al-Ahram: "Has violence become a phenomenon in our era? And, if the answer is yes, why?... We now read that thuggery is spreading like a cancerous growth in our society. We read about more and more strange incidents of criminal and political violence. It is strange that this phenomenon is not being discussed in the media or by sociologists and psychiatrists or the police. The lack of discussion can only heighten the sense of insecurity in our society and spread an atmosphere of fear in which violence could flourish. Why do we not discuss the phenomenon frankly? Why do the experts not tell us where we have gone wrong? It is very important that the authorities should confront thuggery before matters get worse."
(Ahmed Bahgat, 28 July)

Compiled by **Hala Saqr**



The only thing Rania Elwani is likely to drown in is a pile of medals... The golden fish who paddled off with nine golds and two silvers at the Pan-Arab Games reminds me of a mermaid. With that image in mind, I added ripples and swirls to her hair. The lines I drew when sketching her seemed to curve of their own accord, as if reflected in a pool of water. And the large medal around her neck closely resembles the shield of a sea goddess...





Close up

Salama A. Salama

Organised robbery

The current fashion in Europe at the moment is to look for one's name on the long lists of account holders published by Swiss banks recently. Demanding that Jewish-American lobby groups be allowed to comb Europe for Jewish gold said to have been deposited and then stolen during World War II is also a popular trend.

All this, of course, is based on stories that are hard to prove after 50 years. It is strange that history should be so clear on this matter, since hardly anyone remembers anything about recent Israeli laws forbidding the Palestinians from claiming any compensation for the harm they have suffered and the property stolen from them, although these violations (no less terrible, surely, than the crimes of which the Jews accuse the Swiss) continue until this day.

Switzerland, under the menace of an American boycott or trial in an international court, finally agreed to break its rule of silence and revealed the names of account-holders. It paid $60 million to establish a humanitarian fund for the victims of the holocaust and issued a list of the names and account numbers of about 3,000 individuals. This list includes a number of leading Nazis, amongst them an art dealer who supplied Goering himself with masterpieces. There are also 1,800 account numbers whose ownership is unknown.

Having laid itself open to extortion once, the Swiss government is now vulnerable. The head of the Jewish World Congress has declared that the Swiss estimates were insufficient and has claimed approximately three billion dollars as the total of the deposits and their accrued interest. All that was not enough, however. The Swiss banks have announced their intention of publishing another list of 20,000 accounts.

The matter does not end with Switzerland and the Swiss banks. Certain British banks have instituted searches of their books, lest they be the next target for Jewish claims. The greatest potential catastrophe, however, concerns the accusations now being made against the Vatican. It is a well-known fact that the Vatican was a neutral party during the last war, and it seems that the Jewish community has no intention of sparing it now.

A recently released American document proves that the Vatican held around $170 million worth of gold for Croatian fascists close to the Nazis. The Vatican denied this violently, describing the accusation as an obvious ploy to damage relations with Israel. The Jewish lobby, however, felt that the Vatican's denial was not at all conclusive, in spite of all the doctrinal and historical concessions it has made to Zionism, among them clearing the Jews of all blame in the death of Christ (once a common conviction among Christians).

It seems clear that Jewish-American cooperation has remained close in the coordination of these media campaigns. Some observers belive that this cooperation aims to weaken the position of Switzerland, the largest and most powerful financial centre in the world, and thereby attract deposits and investments to American banks, which are opening new branches in Europe and elsewhere, in an effort to replace Swiss financial institutions by the turn of the century.

Can the Palestinians claim a share of these compensations, on the grounds that they are the ultimate victims of a complicated project which envisaged a homeland for the Jews on Palestinian land?

The Jewish move to retrieve money from obscure accounts appears legal, at least on the surface. The claim is backed by a group of the most prestigious lawyers in America and the world, as well as by the US government itself. In the final analysis, it is a legal issue depending on basic facts, not a political issue, as in the Palestinian case. Furthermore, the Palestinians have remained silent, even after the most recent Israeli law was passed, forbidding them from claiming any compensation for the theft of their land and livelihood.



Soapbox

Reform and repression

From time to time Egypt, particularly its larger cities, is struck by a wave of semi-organised petty crime and violence. While there is no specific legal definition for thuggery, I consider it includes violence aimed at extracting revenge, obtaining specific benefits, or sowing a general atmosphere of panic. Such acts are sometimes committed for the perpetrator's personal benefit, or on someone's behalf, in return for money or other privileges.

Recent incidents of this nature cannot be compared with traditional thuggery. Presumably, several factors have led to the emergence of hooliganism in its present form. The most important of these include the high unemployment rate among the young, informal settlements, and the use of private security guards, which implies that the state is incapable of providing sufficient protection.

The only solution seems to be applying emergency law in cases of hooliganism, pending the preparation of comprehensive legal procedures. The establishment of reform camps in the desert would also serve for the rehabilitation of self-appointed "strongmen".

But we must also deal with unemployment and very poor living conditions. Stronger police measures, such as the increase in the number of mobile units, and regular security raids, would also be effective, however.



This week's Soapbox speaker is a researcher in sociology and criminology. **Ali Fahmi**

The end of Arab history

Few have learned the lessons of the Gulf crisis, writes **Gamil Matar**. So what was behind the soundbites?

Only a handful of people have been able to free themselves from the media upheaval which accompanied the Iraq invasion of Kuwait and the subsequent war of liberation, or taken the time to remember the events of the preceding weeks, months, and even years. Those who have gone beyond the soundbites, however, believe that the war which led to the invasion of Kuwait and the attack on Iraq was, primarily, a war against Arab solidarity and unity.

This war has been especially stubborn and protracted. At the same time, it remains unrecorded, because it was never declared, never obvious. It is a war governed by narrow interests, far narrower than the regional nation-state interests which pan-Arabists wrongly blame for the current crisis. In spite of its longevity, this war is still flourishing. Its protagonists are an elite of Arab politicians and leaders; its victims are the Arabs in general. The main advocates and ideologues of this war are individuals close to the centres of power, the palaces and ministries of foreign affairs. Their task is to distort the image of the Arabs in the eyes of the Arabs, to encourage conflict among Arab rulers, and to impede all attempts to build economic, political and cultural links among Arab peoples — if these links are meant to benefit large segments of the Arab populace. The frail links which now exist, further, are to be destroyed by any means possible.

The Arab League, for example, has born the brunt of an unparalleled campaign of slander and distortion. During its not inconsiderable life span there have been concerted attempts to undermine it, prevent it from engaging in any sort of effective action, and abort its original mission. In the year preceding the invasion of Kuwait, this Arab regional organisation was beleaguered from all sides. Some delegations displayed the greatest arrogance in discussions of any attempt to promote joint Arab action. I consistently asked them: if you despise the Arabs so much, why not give up your membership and go your own way? Obviously, this was not an option; none of them would have contemplated conceding this token of their Arab identity. Their real problem, it transpired, was that they hated themselves. I did not know this at the time. In fact, I only came to this realisation during and after the Gulf War.

I still come across articles whose authors are eager to blame the Arab regional order — not Saddam Hussein, the Arab Socialist Baath party, or the generals of the Republican Guard — for the invasion of Kuwait and its consequences. Initially, at the time of the invasion, it was difficult to understand the logic behind this opinion. The Arab order created neither Saddam nor his possible nemesis. It did not lay down the ground rules for dealings between Arab rulers. The rulers themselves agreed on the game and wrote their own rules.

Now it is clear that the campaign against the Arab order aims to destroy the symbols of that order. These symbols are the greatest threat to the narrow, selfish vested interests of a handful of dominant families who hold the keys to power in most Arab countries, regardless of the system of government, society or economy in those countries. These interests are jeopardised by the growing tide of nation-state regionalism. Contrary to the claims of the antagonists of pan-Arabism, the Arab order protects the nation-state and nation-state regionalism. Since the pan-Arab order consists of nation-states, it can only be viable as a supra-regional order if all its members are fully independent, as is the case with the international order.

In other words, just as membership in a stable and dynamic international order serves to safeguard national autonomy, so does membership in a regional order, such as the Arab order, ensure the stability of the nation-state. This, in turn, provides the incentive to develop autonomous institutions as well as the institutions of the regional organisation to which the state belongs. In this perspective, higher degrees of regional coordination and cooperation are possible in exchange for a very minor sacrifice of national sovereignty. Indeed, the degree of sovereignty Arab countries would have to concede to function within the Arab order would be far less than that which they have been prepared to sacrifice in exchange for US or European protection.

Recent years have seen a modest, though persistent, attempt on the part of several Arab countries to build an Arab common market, achieve more effective Arab consolidation against Israel, and coordinate efforts to counter threats of division, blockade and the devastation of Arab wealth. Simultaneously, the campaign against the Arab order and the symbols of this order has intensified in proportion. This campaign is orchestrated by hired ideologues and functionaries, the clients of a few extremely powerful groups in various Arab countries.

This concerted campaign is as virulent as that which surrounded the invasion of Kuwait. Its intensity is due to the revival of pan-Arab symbols, which have filled the void left when narrow vested interests and fascist, dictatorial tendencies proved bankrupt. The purpose of this campaign is to keep us imprisoned within the confines of the Iraqi-Kuwaiti debacle. The stridency of the tone, however, betrays a fear that, as history takes its course, the Arabs will transcend the Gulf crisis and take concrete steps toward solidarity and cooperation.

Seven years ago, some writers announced the end of Arab history. Since that time — i.e., since Saddam Hussein decided to invade Kuwait and Arab governments called on foreign troops for assistance — everyone has benefited except the Arabs. Arab wealth has been spent on planes, armoured vehicles and warships that will probably rust before they are ever used, although divisions between Arab countries are still being fueled by the Security Council and the US. There has been no improvement in relations between most Arab countries and Iran, which, in turn, suffers periodic incursions from the West and attempts to foster conflicts in the name of Gulf oil. Last but not least, since the "end of Arab history", Israel has obtained more than its ruling elites had ever dreamed of. It has plundered and annexed most of the Palestinians' land and most of Jerusalem. It has cordoned off Palestinian cities, isolating them from one another, and appointed a Palestinian guard dog to guarantee its own security.

These achievements, clearly, were cause for a celebration, which is why Arabs and non-Arabs gathered this week — to exclaim in triumph at the end of Arab history.

The writer is director of the Arab Centre for Development and Futuristic Research.

Desperate measures

The call to end militant violence does not signal the end of the confrontation, writes **Nabil Abdel-Fattah**

The statement issued by the imprisoned leaders of the Jihad and Al-Gama'a Al-Islamiya groups, calling upon their followers and the organisations' cadres in Egypt and abroad to refrain from armed activities or incitements to violence, came as something of a surprise to observers of the radical Islamist movement in Egypt. Those who issued the statement emphasised that it was merely an appeal, not an order. This implies that a meeting was held between members of the organisation's Shura Council and that a resolution was issued. For this to take place, however, a majority vote would have been necessary. Under present conditions, with some leaders residing abroad, and others imprisoned, such a meeting, naturally, would have been impossible to convene.

The statement seems aimed at erasing one of the points over which the state and the militant Islamist groups have clashed the most fiercely since the assassination of Sadat and other establishment figures, and especially during the spells of violence which marked the early nineties. Why, then, was it issued, what are its internal repercussions, and what is the state's response?

Several factors prompted the delivery of this appeal. First is the success of the state's repressive and security machinery in dealing effectively with militant violence. Preventive strikes and continual raids on potential trouble spots, especially in Upper Egypt, as well as the siege on various local cells of the militant groups, made it possible to deter further violence.

The apparent effectiveness of this policy both in Upper Egypt and in the greater Cairo area were closely followed by Western political and media circles.

The military courts' proficiency also seems to have played a role in creating a general atmosphere of public restraint, despite widespread criticism in light of the fact that trying civilians in military courts is illegal.

The relative weakness of the militant groups has made it difficult for them to pursue further action during the past two years, especially given the destruction of the communication networks linking leaders inside Egypt with their regional counterparts elsewhere.

Widespread frustration in the areas where the militants are most active, due to the increasingly violent spiral of violence and counter-violence, which had resulted in paralysis of daily life in Upper Egypt, also contributed to curbing the phenomenon. The middle and ruling classes' apprehension at the possibility of violence disrupting their lives may have reinforced the decline in support for the militants.

A certain awareness on the part of the groups' leaders that time could only be detrimental to the efficacy of their organisation also developed during their spell in prison.

Security strikes led to the liquidation of the prominent cadres, either during violent confrontations, or through the court trials and the death sentences. Between 60 and 90 per cent of top cadres may have been eliminated in these ways.

All these factors have affected the organisation's homogeneity and capabilities with respect to planning, communication, and movement. These factors constitute the background of the issued appeal, around which several internal positions have crystallised. Most of the imprisoned leaders, with the exceptions represented by Nabil El-Maghrabi, and Abdel-Raouf, the militants' emir, who have not expressed an opinion, have approved the appeal. Its supporters include Tarek El-Zumur, and Saleh Jahin.

Gama'a leaders abroad previously considered violence as a form of self-defence. They had declared that a halt to violence was conditional on the full implementation of Islamic legislature, Shari'a, the freezing of the normalisation process, and the rescinding of all agreements with Israel. They also demanded that the government cease referring defendants to military courts, release all detainees, and return the mosques established by the Gama'a to the group's control.

The Fatah Vanguard, under the leadership of Ayman El-Zawahri, on the other hand, are more inclined to reject an end to violent operations. The militant leaders abroad probably expect something in return for their agreement to end violence. They are in a strong position, with funds at their disposal, and the possibility of communicating with the international media, as well as the freedom to travel and organise operations.

The official position has been to cast doubt on the credibility of the statement. It is likely that the government will pursue its siege on Al-Gama'a and Jihad, in view of its relative success so far.

Furthermore, conditions are no longer what they were during the attempted reconciliation undertaken by Sheikhs El-Shaarawi and El-Ghazali with the former interior minister, Abdel-Halim Moussa. Despite the relative success of the security measures, and the relative weakness evidenced by the militants of late, there are indications that the factors contributing to violence still prevail.

The writer is editor-in-chief of the State of Religion in Egypt Report issued by the Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies.

To The Editor

Strange justice

Sir - I am writing in response to Ben Friedman's letter "Visit postponed" (*Al-Ahram Weekly*, 17-23 July) in which he unjustifiably accused Egypt of being "more interested in playing politics than dealing with the realities on the ground". I think the writer's problem stems, in part, from his misconception that Egypt — especially after its signing the peace treaty with Israel — now has nothing to do with the Arab world. Therefore, he jumps to the conclusion that Egyptians' hatred of Israel is 'unwarranted'. He finds it difficult to understand that Egypt is — and always will be — committed to defending Arab rights.

Perhaps the writer can tell us how Egyptians should feel toward Israel when it continues to deny Palestinians their basic rights and self-determination, when it persists in defying UN resolutions as regards its expansionist policies in Arab occupied territories, and when Christian and Islamic holy symbols are profaned publicly in Hebron and elsewhere.

Finally, Ben Friedman implicitly attacked the system of justice in Egypt without really telling us what exactly is wrong with it or in what way its Israeli counterpart is superior. In several cases Israelis convicted of committing serious crimes against Palestinians have been released under the pretext that they were insane, which is hardly convincing. It is very obvious that the Israeli judicial system does not at all treat Israelis and Palestinians as equal.

Palestinians are, in most cases, given far harsher sentences, not to mention how they are treated in Israeli prisons. It seems that Israel's understanding of justice does not greatly differ from its understanding of peace.

Essam Hanna Wahba
Assiut

Treatment required

Sir- Mr Ben Friedman, in his letter to the editor (*Al-Ahram Weekly*, issue 334), presents an interesting case study, for he is obviously suffering from an acute inflated ego combined with a distorted perception of facts. While refraining from even trying to rectify his erroneous conceptions, I approve his decision to postpone visiting Egypt, not for the reasons he mentioned but hopefully because he will be undergoing psychotherapy that might be beneficent in, at least, moderating his language.

Mohamed Hussein Salim
Alexandria

Renting culture

Sir - I was astonished by an item in *Al-Ahram Al-Missa'i* (13 July) concerning the Luxor City Council's decision to rent out the home of architect Hassan Fathi. This decision could put an end to the cultural activities (seminars, poetry nights or art exhibitions) currently taking place there.

I was also astonished that this coincides with the decision of the American University in Cairo's Rare Books Library to obtain Fathi's books and private collections, which attract thousands of architects and intellectuals from all over the world.

This is what the West does with our heritage. What are we going to do? How long will we underestimate our own civilisation and cultural heritage?

Hazem Youssef Mahmoud
Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies

Israel's Pyramids

Sir - While visiting the Pyramids in the '70s, Menachem Begin told his entourage that his forefathers were the ones who had built them. The late PM did not say that in jest or at random. Thereafter, a systematic campaign was undertaken in the Western media to deny Egypt its civilisation and history. Dominated by the Jewish lobby, the media has also floated the notion that the genuine builders of the Pyramids are unknown.

Then, all of a sudden, Israeli satellite TV brazenly adopted the pyramids as its emblem. Presumably, if Israel is left unchallenged, the world will soon believe its preposterous claims.

Maybe Western archaeologists will fabricate a scientific discovery to support the idea of the Jews being those who built the Pyramids. In a few years, this bizarre scenario will be accepted. Perhaps Israel will insist on constructing settlements around "its" Pyramids in Giza. Then it can demand that Egypt pay reparations. These, of course, will be commensurate with the number of tourists who have visited the Pyramids since they were built.

Mahmoud Elewa
Maadi



Yellow is not gold

David Blake tests the carats and hears Schubert on a Nubian holiday

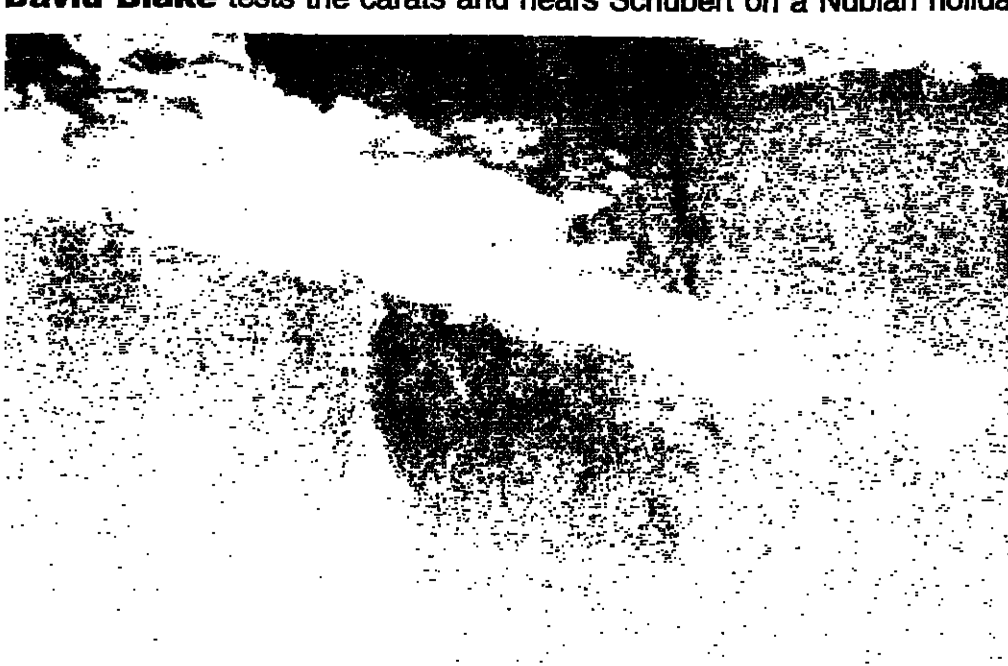
Karam Mourad; Open Air Theatre, Cairo Opera House; 19 July

The songs Karam Mourad presented this July evening spread out before the listener on an audio visual travel carpet. They may have magic of a type: certainly they confabulated the years.

The country called Nubia was a ribbon-like thread of gold without beginning or end. It was merely a visiting presence, stretched out along the River Nile, staying a few millenniums then departing. No other land, apart perhaps from Sicily, has ever produced such legends. Sicily, though, remains while Nubia has departed to become no more than a travel label. But a part of the real Nubia remains in its music.

Unfortunately there is no Nubian equivalent to Sicily's troubadour of the broken heart, Giusseppe de Stefano. There is, though, Karam Mourad. He did his best, but the Nubian presence remained embarrassing, a little like that group of unwanted guests at your high-*profile birthday party*. What to do with the family? Turn them into a cabaret — its harmless, and you don't have to acknowledge them. So Nubia became a bazaar land with sand castles in the sky and glass beads for diamonds. Unlike the Nile, another ghost that can still bite, Nubia's is a gentle haunting. This concert covered some of the ground. What was missing we must perforce do without, though music, being boundless, has a tendency to visualise memories.

Through the songs runs a ground swell, an *ostinato* note of loss and regret, but things must go on for Nubian rhythm never finishes. Karam Mourad's concert showed how things can be done. A group of galabayia clad, tall, swaying young men looking like Pierro della Francesca angels, provided the percussive element that is such an original feature of Nubian music. It is baritonal, deep and muffled, as though heard from a far distant place. Evocative more, though, of present reality than a presence. They swayed back and forth.





Though Nubia has become no more than a travel label a part of the real land survives in its music

Strange that these concerts come always at summer time, adding a piquant flavour of heat and calm to the Cairo night time craze. Mourad's voice is also odd. Not exactly beautiful or classical. There is no hint of operatic or formal training. It has a cool, rather rough surface, like linen. This adds to the double entendre of the sound: rough and smooth, here and far, passing close to us but unknown. Very original — like a clever poker player this singer reveals little until the last moment of the song.

These songs are folkloric Nubian. *Henayna* was a sad song, followed by *Sudfa*, a bitter song about coincidence. And all the emotion is contained in the rhythm, as the group flows like boats on the Nile, the same yet constantly changing. Then came a song called *Farushat* (Butterflies), with words by Mohamed El-Essiery. Light and lovely, with a serious centre. The sung language sounds beautiful. Indeed there was much that was beautiful about this evening, though there was no mystery about Ahmed Mounib's famous song, *Moshtakeen* (Longing). Mohieddin El-Sherif's lyrics are as explicit as the music — the land of gold, the land of great love is the theme. It is everyone's song and strikes its mark very simply, like Schubert's *Kennst du das Land*.

A Summer Musical Bouquet; Valerie de Casas (soprano); Samir Mansour (piano); Ewart Hall, 24 July

This concert brought another shade of golden yellow, far removed from the blazing summer streets of central Cairo. We appear to be in somebody's home, a study or drawing room, and the mood is quite Victorian with potted plants on the tables, flowers strewn everywhere. A kind of harvest festival without the vegetables. The two soloists greeted each other, she in splendid yellow dress with black sunflowers, he rather Palm Beach but in trousers. Everything was very relaxed, perhaps a little too relaxed. She sat on a causeuse while he played his introductory Scarlatti sonatas in E major and D minor.

Samir Mansour is a powerful pianists and Scarlatti doesn't need this kind of force. Yet the playing ended sounding thin and lacking edge. Next a little Handel, done beautifully, accompanying Valerie de Casas in the showpiece *O Had I Jubal's Lyre*, from the oratorio *Joshua*.

She is a mystery singer who seldom sings. When she does, she shows that she knows her business, possessed of a fine, strong, evenly paced soprano. There is nothing tentative: her teaching has given her authority and assurance. She knows French, Italian and German, and projects them clearly. The Handel was very grand, the coloratura given a proper, slow manner, *with nothing light* or fluttering.

Samir Mansour went on to play Chopin, beginning tentatively and then letting himself go, bringing fireworks.

The Ewart Hall is not kind to piano tone, but he managed to produce brilliance and depth. Bizet's *L'adieu de l'hotesse Arabe* was tricky — high flying and low dropping with plenty of trills. The singer was warm and steady, with no wobble, bringing the scene to dramatic life. She then did two Ravel songs — *Nicolette*, difficult, spry, cute and not very melodic. She characterised it well. A Habanera followed, with all the ornaments in the right place. She is at home with the French repertoire and you hear all the words.

The concert ended with Mansour playing Liszt's horrible *Rhapsody No 6*. He rose to the octaves and the keyboard splashing. If you feel you need Liszt it is better to leave the rhetoric and pick out his great visual poems for the piano. And then came the encore — Gershwin's *Summertime*.

Valerie de Casas, despite walking around so much, does know how to stand still. *Summertime* has spent its life as the private property of Leontine Price, who floated it into dream land. Valerie de Casas was fine, managing its cruel *tessitura* easily and with the right nostalgia. The bouquet had kept its perfume till the end.

Art

Figures and faces

Nigel Ryan on features that resolve into a multitude of types

Enter the Mashrabiya Gallery and there is a deceptive air of restraint. To the right, in the glass case, are three small paintings by Ibrahim El-Haddad, blank faces, the furthest of the three completed on wrapping paper. You know they are faces, or rather heads and shoulders, because of the pencilled outlines. Beyond that, the picture surfaces are modulated only by broad swathes of colour, and the blank areas of white that serve, nominally, as the faces. The painting on wrapping paper also has folds, as if painted on the front of a manila envelope, a slightly distracting detail that serves little, if any, purpose.

But do not be fooled, for this is about as restrained as it gets at the Mashrabiya's summer show. And once inside the gallery proper, Ibrahim El-Haddad's good-mannered reductionism quickly slips from the mind. This is not a result of any particular art work hanging on the walls, but rather a function of there being so many. For the summer the Mashrabiya has really crammed them in: every inch of wall space has been filled and the result, unfortunately, is that it becomes extremely difficult to concentrate on anything in particular.

It is inevitable, in these closed season group shows, that there will be discrepancies in the hanging of exhibitions. Seldom, though, do galleries appear so intent on stock clearance, or of giving the impression of being so intent.

Naturally, some of the images will be familiar. Fathi Hassan, for instance, is still plugging away at Africa, though in the interval since his one-man show I must confess to having forgotten his three contributions to the summer extravaganza. But whether new works or not they will be instantly recognisable to anyone who visited his individual exhibition: all three are small scale, one has an antelope, another a lion, the third a girl in cache sex, each set against backdrops of more or less solid colour, occasionally embossed like heavy duty wallpaper or flocked, like the kind of wall covering that was once de rigeur in down-market Indian restaurants. Beyond the banality of the choice of stand-ins for a continent — big game and natives at their most native — there is nothing objectionable about these pieces. When there was an entire gallery full of these things, under, I seem to recall, the title Africa, the cynical ploy of identity politics as selling point combined with the caricature of what is, in fact, quite a diverse place, not just a safari park or National Geographic pull out, was a little too much to stomach. Here, less is definitely better.

One of the most consistent aspects of these summer exhibitions is the continuing emphasis on the figurative. Apart from Mohamed Aboul Naga, whose ecologically-minded nest building has resulted in fibrous assemblages that resemble nothing so much as half made paper in a state of decomposition, and Ayman El-Semari's less than ecologically-minded vertical sheets of shiny steel with projecting iron rivets, almost everything is figurative. Faces abound — in the two contributions by Adel El-Siwi they assume monumental proportions, threatening to burst the top and bottom of the frame as they are stretched between parallel bands of colour, the only horizontal being provided by the thick, for which, I think, one is intended to read voluptuous, lips — as do figures.

Face and figure can be glimpsed through mirrors, as in Waghih Wahba's ambiguous and slightly fussy interiors, one with scratchy reclining form. Georges Baghory paints an almost Byzantine face on papyrus, and in a second painting breaks another face into several hemispherical planes. Often, though, such interest in structural analysis is absent. Outlines do the job just as well, especially if what you are after is a symbolic cypher. Hence, in a series of three collages, Mahmoud Hamed scratches the outline of a devil — you know because of the horns — in blue paint applied over pieces of fine metal mesh, with the occasional ornamentation in gold. The result, despite the attempt to include supposedly disturbing elements — in one of these pieces there appears to be a disembodied chicken's head — are decorative pieces in which colour, surface texture, and the odd bits of gilding combine to contain whatever the artist intended within the bounds of prettiness.

Faces stare out at you from everywhere. Floating across the peppermint surface of a largish canvas by Essam Marouf is the fleshy, slightly deeper peppermint face of Alexander. Next to Alexander the blank, beige face of a young boy.

Yasser Grab is less content with *bits* of bodies, and so stretches his figures into elongated worms that stroll across lurid, nightmarish landscapes. Three of Aziz El-Hihi's beastly babies line one wall, square-bodied, bland-faced, signifying very little beyond their own voraciousness. These are not nice images, though it is possible, I suppose, to mistake them as cute.

Mohamed Abla produces luminous, almost monochromatic images of bathers wading out into the river, surprisingly academic studies of the surface of water. And there are other oddities, not least the single canvas by Salah Hassouna.

There are some pieces that simply raise a smile, a luridly glass fish by Fatma El-Tanani, with skin the texture of toasted cheese, and Romano Della Chiesa's stencilled, pictorial, furnished flat inventories, replete with stencilled commentary. The washing machine, apparently, washes Chiesa's soul.

Too much written already? The problem, though, is that fairness demands that everyone be included. Space, though, dictates otherwise. So out of the gallery, past the refreshing reductionism of Ibrahim El-Haddad. Visit when the place is likely to be empty. With real people in the gallery, it *will* be too much.

Listings

EXHIBITIONS

Valparaiso
Cervantes Institute for Spanish Culture, Alexandria annex, 101 El-Horreya Avenue, Alexandria.
An exhibit of lithographs, postcards and photographs.

Mohab El-Sayed (Paintings)
Ragheb Seddiq Hall, Cairo Atelier, 2 Karim El-Dawla St, Downtown. Tel 574 6730. Daily exc Fri, 10am-1pm & 6pm-10pm. Until 31 July.

Ibrahim Abdel-Hamid Manis (Paintings)
Cairo Atelier, 2 Karim El-Dawla St, as above. Until 31 July.

Art for All
Salama Gallery, 36/A Ahmed Orabi St, Mohandessin. Tel 346 3242. Daily exc Fri, 10am-2pm & 5pm-10pm. Until 31 July.
Works by Mohamed El-Nagdi, Abu Bakr El-Nawawi, Galal El-Hosseiny, Gihan Raouf and others, celebrating the birth of the Prophet Mohamed.

Hamdi Ateya (Paintings)
Hotel Sofitel, Hurghada. Tel 065/442261. Daily until 31 July.

Ebada El-Zoheiry (Works in ink)
Doma Gallery, 20 Abdel-Aziz Gawish St, Bab El-Louq. Tel 355 8367. Daily noon-10pm. Until 14 August.

Mounir Banoub
Exhibition Hall, Al-Ahram Building, El-Galaa St, Boulaq. Tel 5786100. Daily 9am-10pm. Until 31 July
Works under the title Between Egypt and Canada.

Milton Glaser
Sony Gallery, Main Campus, American University in Cairo, Mohamed Mahmoud St. Tel 357 5424. Daily exc Fri & Sat, 9am-12pm & 6pm-9pm. Until 15 Sept.
Posters and book covers, store designs and toy creations, magazine formats and logotypes are on display at the artist's first exhibition in the Middle East.

Collective Exhibition
Espace Gallery, 1 El-Sherifein St, Downtown. Tel 393 1699. Daily 10am-2pm & 6pm-9pm; Fri 6pm-9pm. Until 20 Sept.
A retrospective display of works by Assem Sharaf, Dina El-Gharib, Hassan Ali Ahmed, Hazem El-Mestekawy, Hisham El-Zeiny, Hussein Sharif, Mohamed Abdel-Moneim, Omar El-Payoumi and Sherif Abdel-Badie, all of whom held exhibitions at the gallery during the last season.

Summer Collection
Khan El-Maghraby Gallery, 18 El-Mansour Mohamed St, Zamalek. Tel 340 3349. Daily exc Fri, 10.30am-2pm & 5pm-10pm. Until the end of Sept.
Works by Tahiya Halim, Abdel-Wahab Morsi, Salem Salah, George Bahgoury, Hassan Abdel-Fattah, among others.

Group Exhibition
Mashrabiya Gallery, 8 Champollion St, Downtown. Tel 578 4494. Daily 5pm-10pm. Until the end of Sept.
Works by over 20 artists, including George Bahgouri, Mohamed Abla, Salah Hassouna, Xavier Puigmarti, Esmat Dawistashi and Aziz El-Hihi.

Suzanne Mubarak Children's Museum
34 Abu Bakr El-Seddiq St, Heliopolis. Tel 249 9915. Daily exc Mon, 9am-2pm.

The Museum of Mr and Mrs Mohamed Mahmoud Khalil
1 Kafour El-Akhshid St, Dokki. Tel 336 2376. Daily exc Mon, 10am-6pm.
Egypt's largest collection of nineteenth century European art, amassed by the late Mahmoud Khalil and his wife, includes works by Courbet, Van Gogh, Gauguin, and Rodin and a host of impressionist works, housed in the villa once belonging to the Khalils and converted into a museum with little, if any, expense spared. There are also a number of excellent orientalist works.

Egyptian Museum
Tahrir Sq, Downtown. Tel 575 4319. Daily exc Fri, 8am-5pm; Fri 9am-11.15am & 1pm-3pm.
The world's largest collection of Pharaonic and Ptolemaic treasures, including massive granite statues and the smallest household objects used by the Ancient Egyptians, along with, of course, the controversial mummies room. A perennial must.

Coptic Museum
Mar Girgis, Old Cairo. Tel 362 8766. Daily exc Fri, 9am-4pm; Fri 9am-11am & 1pm-3pm.
Founded in 1910, the museum houses a distinguished collection of Coptic art and artefacts, including textiles, manuscripts, icons and architectural features in a purpose built structure in the heart of the Coptic city.

Islamic Museum
Port Said St, Ahmed Maher St, Bab El-Khalq. Tel 390 9930/390 1520. Daily exc Fri, 9am-4pm; Fri 9am-11.30am & 2pm-4pm.
A vast collection of Islamic arts and crafts including *mashrabiya*, instreware ceramics, textiles, woodwork, coins and manuscripts drawn from Egypt's Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mameluke periods and from other countries in the Islamic world.

Museum of Modern Egyptian Art
Opera House Grounds, Gezira. Tel 340 6861. Daily exc Mon, 10am-1pm & 5pm-9pm.
A permanent display of paintings and sculpture charting the modern art movement in Egypt from its earliest pioneers to latest practitioners. A state of the art museum housing the contemporary art of the state.

Mohamed Nagui Museum
Château Pyramids, 9 Mahmoud Al-Guindi St, Giza.
A museum devoted to the paintings of Mohamed Nagui (1888-1956), the Alexandrian aristocrat who is considered one of the pioneers of the modern Egyptian art movement.

Mahmoud Mukhtar Museum
Tahrir St, Gezira. Daily exc Sun and Mon, 9am-1.30pm.
A permanent collection of works by the sculptor Mahmoud Mukhtar (d. 1934), whose granite monument to Saad Zaghloul stands near Qasr El-Nil Bridge, and whose Egypt Awakening became, somewhat belatedly, an icon of post revolutionary Egypt.

FILMS

The Heart Within: Oceans, Lifeblood of Japan & Nature, Giver of Blessings
Japanese Information and Culture Centre, 106 Qasr El-Aini St, Garden City. 31 July, 6pm.

Indian Films
Maulana Abul-Kalam Azad Centre for Indian Culture, 27 Talaat Harb St, Downtown. Tel 392 5162.
31 July, 4.30pm: Ganga Yamuna Saraswati
4 August, 4.30pm: Mahaan
The Indian Cultural Centre continues its summer season of Amitab Bachchan's films

Indian Cultural Festival for Children
The latest Indian films for children, clay modelling, floor designs, kite making, yoga, Hindustani music, exhibitions, books, documentaries, dolls, and more at the Integrated Care Society, Heliopolis. Until August. For more information, contact the Information Service of the Indian Embassy, 37 Talaat Harb St, Downtown. Tel 392 5243/392 5162/3927573.

Commercial cinemas change their programmes every Monday. The information provided is valid through to Sunday after which it is wise to check with the cinemas. Arabic films are seldom subtitled. For information, contact the venue.

101 Dalmatians
Ramsis Hilton, Corniche El-Nil St. Tel 574 7435. Daily 1.30pm, 330pm, 6.30pm, 9.30pm & midnight. El-Horreya I, El-Horreya Mall, Heliopolis. Tel 452 9980. Daily 1pm, 3pm, 6pm, & 9pm. Odeon 1, Abdel Hamid Said st, Downtown, Tel 575 8797
Glen Close as Cruella de Vil in Walt Disney's latest blockbuster

Mars Attacks
Karim 2 15 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 592 4830. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.
With Jack Nicholson, Glenn Close and Danny De Vito.

Liar Liar
El-Haram, El-Haram St, Giza. Tel 385 8358. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. El-Horreya, El-Horreya Mall, Heliopolis. Tel 452 9980. Daily 1pm, 3pm, 6pm, & 9pm. Ramsis Hilton, Corniche El-Nil St. Tel 574 7435. Daily 1.30pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm, 9.30pm & midnight.
For one day attorney Jim Carrey can only tell the truth.

The English Patient
Odeon III, Abdel Hamid Said St, Downtown. Tel 575 8797 Daily 10.30am, 1.30pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm.
Willem Dafoe, Ralph Fiennes and Juliette Binoche in the nine Oscar award-winning adaptation of Michaoel Oondjate's novel.

Toffaha, see films

Two Much
Cosmos II, 12 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 779 537. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. El-Salam, 65 Abdel-Hamid Badawi St, Heliopolis. Tel 293 1072. Daily 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm. MGM, Kolleyat El-Nasr Sq, Maadi. Tel 352 3066. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.
With Antonio Banderas, Melanie Griffith and Daryl Hannah.

Ransom
Odeon II, as above. Daily 10.30am, 1.30pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm.
With Mel Gibson.

Double Team
Cairo Sheraton, El-Galaa St, Giza. Tel 360 6081. Daily 10.30am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm, 9pm & midnight. Karim 1, 15 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 591 6095. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Normandy, 31 El-Ahram St, Heliopolis. Tel 258 0254. Daily 12.30pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm.
With Jean-Claude Van Damme, Dennis Rodman and Mickey Rourke

The Nutty Professor
Metro, 35 Talaat Harb St, Downtown. Tel 393 3897. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.
With Eddie Murphy.

Harmonni Ya...
Cinema Cairo, Saray El-Azbekiyya, downtown. Tel 574 5350. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Sphinx, Sphinx Sq, Mohandessin. Tel 346 4017. Daily 8pm. Tiba II, Nasr City. Tel 262 9407. Daily 10.30am, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm.
Fifi Abdu's belly-dancing hit transferred to the screen.

Toffaha (A Girl Called Apple)
Diana Palace, 17 El-Alfi St, Emadeddin, Downtown. Tel 924 727. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.
With Leila Elwi and Magued El-Masri.

The Woman and the Cleaver
Miami, 38 Talaat Harb St, Downtown. Tel 574 5656. Daily noon, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Roxy, Roxy Sq, Heliopolis. Tel 258 0344. Daily 10am, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Radio, 24 Talaat Harb St, Downtown. Tel 375 6562. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Tiba I, Nasr City. Tel 262 9407. Daily 10.30am, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm. Lido, 23 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 934 284. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Cosmos I, 12 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 779 537. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.
Nabila Ebeid's latest venture involves the hacking to pieces of men.

MUSIC

An Evening of Oriental Music
Mubarak Public Library, 4, El-Tahawia Street, off El-Nil Street, Giza. Tel 348 8901
The Pro Helvetia Folk Music and Singing school for young musicians, who work closely with the Musicians of the Nile, perform a selection of works from the folk repertoire. Admittance free.

National Arabic Music Ensemble
Open Air Theatre, Opera House, Gezira. Tel 341 2926. 31 July, 9pm.
The ensemble performs selections from the classical repertoire in the manner of a traditional takht.

An evening with drums
Open Air Theatre, Opera House, as above. 1 August, 9pm.
With Ahmed Rabie.

Improvisations on strings
Open Air Theatre, Opera House, as above. 2 August, 9pm.
Ossama Azab.

THEATRE

Toqous El-Esharat Wel-Tahawolat
(Rites of Signs and Tranformations)
El-Hanager, Opera House grounds, Gezira. Tel 340 6861. Daily, 9pm.
Scripted by Saadallah Wanis, directed by Hassan El-Wazir, starring Nabil El-Halafawi, Sawsan Badr and Hamdi El-Wazir.

Mama America
Qasr El-Nil Theatre, Qasr El-Nil St. Tel 575 0761. Sat & Sun 10pm, Mon 8pm.
Starring and directed by Mohamed Sobhi.

'A'elat Wanis (Wanis' Family)
Qasr El-Nil Theatre, as above. Weds & Thurs, 10pm, Fri 8pm.
Directed by Mohamed Sobhi and starring all the family members of the televised series.

Bahlool Fi Istanbul
Hilton Ramsis Theatre, Hilton Ramsis annex, El-Galaa St. Tel 574 7435. Daily 10pm exc Fri, 8.30pm
With Samir Ghanem, Elham Shahin and Bothayna Rashwan.

Leilat Guevara
George Abiad Hall, National Theatre, Ataba Sq. Tel 591 7783. Daily 9pm.
Michael Roman's 1967 play with Khalil Morsi, Manal Zaki and Khaled El-Essawi; directed by Assem Nagati, with choreography by Diana Calenti and music by Mohamed Noah.

Wada'an Ya Bakawat (Farewell Sirs)
George Abiad Hall, National Theatre, Ataba Sq. Tel 591 7783. Daily 10.30pm.
With Hala Sedqi, Farouq El-Fishawi and Ezzat El-Alayli; directed by Essam El-Sayed.

A'lam Guineadi (The World of Guineadi)
Small Hall, *National Theatre, Ataba Sq. Tel 591 7783. Daily 9pm.*
Musical directed by Fawzi El-Melighi, score by Tarek Abbas.

El-Zaim (The Leader)
El-Haram Theatre, Pyramids Road, Giza. Tel 386 3952. Daily 10pm; Fri & Mon 8.30pm.
With Adel Imam; directed by Sherif Arafa.

El-Mahzala (The Disgrace)
El-Salam Theatre, Qasr El-Aini St. Tel 355 2484. Daily 9pm.
Youssef Idris play revived with Sherine, Omar El-Hariri and Tarek El-Dessouqi; directed by Shaker Abdel-Latif.

Ballo (Fanfare)
Madinat Nasr Theatre, Youssef Abbas St, Nasr City. Tel 402 0804. Daily 10pm; Fri & Mon 8.30pm.
A large crowd including Mahmoud El-Guindi, Salah El-Saadani, Samah Anwar and Ashraf Abdel-Baqi and a contingent of Russian ballet dancers; directed by Samir El-Asfouri.

Cronab, Zabadi (Cabbage, Yoghurt)
Radio, 24 Talaat Harb St, Downtown. Tel 575 6562. Daily 10pm, exc Mon & Fri, 8pm
Sayed Saleh, Ahmed Bedeir and legendary dancer Nagwa Fouad, directed by Essam El-Sayed.

Ta'm El-Kalam (The Taste of words)
El-Talia, Ataba Square, Downtown. Tel 937 948. Daily 9pm
Abdullah Mahmoud, Farouk Naguib and Manal Salama, directed by Hossam El-Din Saleh.

Leila Foul (Jasmine Night)
Floating Theatre, Adjacent University Bridge, Manial. Tel 364 9516. For times check with venue.
Mahmoud El-Alfi directs Ola Rami, Emad Rashad, Mohamed Farid and singer Ahmed Ibrahim in a light musical.

All information correct at time of going to press. However, it remains wise to check with venues first, since programmes, dates and times are subject to change at very short notice.
Please send information to Listings, Al-Ahram Weekly, Galaa St, Cairo. Tel 5786064. Fax 5786089/833.

Compiled by **Injy El-Kashef**

Around the galleries

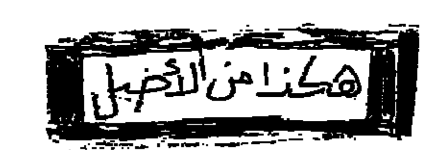


Wagdi Habashi

WAGDI Habashi shows 25 oil paintings at **The Centre for International Cultural Cooperation** in Zamalek. He is obviously drawn to the sea, which assumes mythic proportions in many of these works. Obviously he is more interested in the depiction of dreamscapes than any straightforward rendering of the ocean, hence the presence of so many mysterious figures lurking on the shoreline.

Through the skillful manipulation of colour Habashi manages to create an eerie atmosphere, as if everything is glimpsed through a fog that has just rolled off the sea. In his painting *The Three Sea Girls*, for example, we find the waves forming a whirlpool that assumes the features of a horse.

Reviewed by **Nagwa El-Ashri**



The politics of every day

Avenues of Participation; Family, Politics and Networks in Urban Quarters of Cairo, Diane Singerman: Cairo, AUC Press, 1997

This is an enjoyable book for several reasons. First among them is its limited, flexible nature. Rather than setting herself an agenda, the writer allowed her project to develop as she went along, and collected the members of her sample in a piece-meal, informal way. A handful of initial acquaintances led her to their friends and family, from one household to another, one neighbourhood to the next. She visited homes, offices and schools, workshops and rooftops to gather data which are, more often than not, anecdotal. For a sociologist, or even a historian, the anecdote is often considered a trap to avoid, but it turns out to be one of Singerman's most surprising strengths. It allows her to avoid the far more insidious trap consisting of research guided by a set of pre-defined criteria — research which, ultimately, amounts to measuring how much, or how little, reality matches a standard. Not that Singerman is 'objective' in her methods and conclusions; but she does not pretend to be. On the contrary; it is her very subjectivity, her willingness to be influenced, that makes her remarks interesting.

The author's premise is not new. Much like James Scott, whose work on the 'weapons of the weak' revealed a rich subtext of indirect opposition, subterfuge and resistance beneath the surface of deceptive passivity and fatalism considered characteristic of Third World peoples, she has sought out the hidden, unregulated, unregistered and unclassified aspects of political and economic behaviour and, to a lesser extent, discourse. This desire to understand the methods employed by the inhabitants of working-class areas — it is unfortunate that Singerman persists in calling them 'the *sha'b*' — in securing their share of public goods and services led the researcher to settle in a community in central Cairo, in the area comprising El-Darb El-Ahmar, Gammaliya, Bab El-Sha'riyya and El-Muski. She refuses to identify the community more precisely; she allows the people with whom she lived and spoke to preserve their anonymity, out of respect for the privacy of those 'who were kind enough to share their experiences candidly with [her] and open up their homes and workplaces' [p.20]. It is this reluctance to pinpoint the areas and people which provided the material for her study, as well as her willingness to tell people who she is and what she was doing, which differentiates Singerman's work from that of an informer. In other respects, it is quite similar: unearthing the transactions and networking, the petty corruption and tax evasion, the small gifts and vote-mongering, which escape the notice of the state. While this sensitivity is laudable, however, it often makes for paradoxically generic anecdotes.

These anecdotes, furthermore, are familiar to any Cairene; long queues at the cooperative, crowded public transport, endless waits for routine bureaucratic procedures, schools in which nothing is taught, government workers expected to survive on a pittance... Ordinarily, however, this list of complaints would include the prevalence of petty corruption. One of Singerman's most important contributions lies in the fact that she sees this 'corruption' — bribes, jobs secured through friends of friends, compulsory private tuition, the existence of a black market for subsidised goods — principally as a means of coping. In this context, the proliferation of illegal housing is not a blight on Islamic Cairo's authenticity and a sign of deterioration, but a clear indication of 'the area's vitality and the reconstitution of space for contemporary needs' [p. 27]. Private lessons are a way of obtaining the status granted by an education, a means of by-passing the deficiencies of the 'formal' educational system, and, as far as the teachers are concerned, a system for survival in the face of the meagre salaries meted out by the state. Tax evasion makes it possible to accumulate the resources needed to compete with the public sector, which otherwise would enjoy an overwhelmingly unfair advantage in production and distribution. Singerman's receptivity permits her to label certain strategies — condemned, ignored or derided by other social scientists — as vital institutions which allow the oppressed to survive. Excluded from formal political life by elites which 'have structured political institutions to meet their needs', people from the popular quarters exploit the state's legitimising mechanisms, which have been reduced to its distributive role. By providing goods and services, the government safeguards its populist image; since it has 'reduced the realm of politics to distribution', it must 'maintain its increasingly costly financing of subsidised goods and services or bear the protests of the *sha'b*' [p.39]. This equation is open to pressure 'from below'; through the formation of networks comprising friends, family and neighbours with more or less influence the people attempt to extract as much as possible from their side of the bargain. The goals may differ: securing more than one's allotted share of subsidised goods, by-passing long bureaucratic procedures or obtaining construction licenses are all possible for those with networks of relations.

It is rare for a political scientist educated in Western institutions to resist the temptation of viewing patron-client relations as an insidious, destructive form of corruption. Singerman, however, presents them as mutually beneficial relationships, which guarantee members of parliament votes at election time, for instance. In return for marshaling support, local contacts may receive subsidised apartments, or better employment.

Singerman's willingness to go against the grain extends to other areas as well. Rather than focusing on the *hijab* with the fascination of many social scientists, she views the boundaries of public and private as "permeable", offering "political space for influence from below" [p.44]. She examines the strategies of both men and women in dealing with the state and everyday life, not necessarily a fashionable topic in a field still largely concerned with 'democratic mechanisms', the success or failure of structural adjustment programmes, and, more recently, ways of creating links between the informal sector and the state to relieve the burden on the public sector.

The informal sector, however, is dwelt upon extensively. Singerman, on the other hand, applies it to politics rather than economics — a relatively new tack. Ultimately, she suggests that the accumulation of resources which the informal economy allows will lead to growing pressure on the political sphere, which the elite continues to guard jealously against incursions from below. Yet the questions remain: where are the boundaries between formal and informal politics? Is corruption by any other name a "strategy"? Or does the concept of corruption itself arise from a state-centred perspective?

This rapid outline cannot do justice to the fairly extensive research presented in *Avenues of Participation*. Yet most of the topics the author tackles lead to the same conclusion: the '*sha'b*' is resourceful; it takes advantage of the state's weaknesses; men and women in popular quarters exploit their political role, which has been reduced essentially to one of consumption, in order to survive and even prosper. As the author so succinctly puts it: "To be political, and remain out of danger, is to consume" [p.245]. These observations, and the idea that one can examine such issues as corruption and informal settlements in terms of strategies, not only manifestations of a profound crisis, must be taken into account.

But paradoxically, the units of analysis Singerman uses often undermine her ability effectively to take sides. Her reluctance to apply orthodox class analysis to the neighbourhood she studied is understandable, but forces her to view millionaires and paupers, female peddlers and members of parliament, in more or less the same light, merely by virtue of the fact that they are neighbours. The concept of civil society, now somewhat hackneyed, has been replaced by the family, that institution so dear to scholars of the Middle East. It is the family that protects the individual from the reach of the authoritarian state — another theory familiar to those who have studied Bedouin tribes or peasants at any time, in any country in the region. So in the final analysis, the Oriental despot framework remains quite firmly in place. The lens has merely been shifted; the observer examines the activity below the sphere of formal politics, but the essential dichotomy has not been questioned. At most, Singerman's words of warning that, if the government "is not willing to change the terms of the bargain and allow more political activity and expression in Egypt, both formal and informal, the *sha'b* are unlikely to remain quiescent" serves as a reminder that only liberalisation will defuse the possibility of rebellion. A World Bank official could have said much the same.

Reviewed by ***Pascale Ghazaleh***



In the right camp

Van-Leo: Portraits of Glamour. Cairo: Zeitouna/AUC Press, Cairo, 1996

The sudden flurry of interest in the work of the Armenian photographer Van-Leo continues with the publication of *Portraits of Glamour*, a compilation of photographs together with a short biographical essay by Pierre Gazio. The whole phenomenon, of course carries the heady scent of nostalgia, to note which is not to belittle Van-Leo's work but merely to state the obvious, for few artefacts are as qualified to purvey that skewed version of the past — just think of pictures of your own parents when young — than the photograph. An exemplary stylist, Van-Leo's work provides an engaging but peculiar slant on Cairo, both during the second world war and immediately afterwards.

Life, which is never stylish, hardly gets a look in. Van-Leo deals in artifice, in illusions, and is therefore the perfect spokesperson for that city of cabarets and nightclubs, of perfectly groomed women and rich or famous men. Strangely, in this current compilation of his photographs it is not the famous — a young Omar Sharif, a slightly frumpy Fatma Roushdi, an obviously toupeed Mohamed Abdel-Wahab — that excite the most interest, but the forgotten — a 1945 shot of Mercedes, described as a cabaret entertainer, and the portraits of anonymous actresses and singers, workers at the coal-face of Cairo's glamorous nights whose names have long since been forgotten.

Yet they all receive the same treatment, are posed, and lit, and laboriously retouched, until they fit into Van-Leo's outrageously aestheticised world. It is a world that admits of no compromise and that, in allowing no room for pathos, in retrospect emphasises the very quality it seeks to negate.

Van-Leo is, in modern speak, a control freak. His best work is inspired not just by the Hollywood film still but by such stills in their most extreme form — von Sternberg's publicity shots of Dietrich in the seven American films on which they collaborated, say. There is detachment from his subject, and a savage emphasis of form over content. The perimeters of such a sensibility are, of course, the perimeters of camp. It is here that Van-Leo pitched his tent and, without any trace of irony, it is through his lens that the Cairo that was once not quite the city of the night will be known.

Reviewed by ***Nigel Ryan***

From Moriscos to modern art

Mahmoud El-Wardani makes a selection of the more interesting titles to have appeared in the past month

● ***Qadaya Fikria* (Intellectual Issues), issue 17/18, ed Mahmoud Amin El-Alim. Cairo: Qadaya Fikriya Lil-Nashr Wal-Tawzei, 1997**

In the latest issue of the journal *Qadaya Fikria* (Intellectual Issues), 28 experts drawn from different branches of the humanities explore the question of "the Arabic language in the battle of civilisation". This broad rubric is discussed along six axes: "general issues", "methodological and structural issues", "language between duality and degeneration", "the problematics of translation", "lexicons between developing and obstructing" and "language and the future".

● ***Zaim Masr Al-Awwal... Al-Sayed Omar Makram* (Al-Sayed Omar Makram) & *Ibnat Al-Mamlouk* (Daughter of the Mameluke), Mohamed Farid Abu Hadid. Cairo: Dar Al-Hilal, 1997**

To commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of Mohamed Farid Abu Hadid's death, Dar Al-Hilal has re-printed two of his books. *Zaim Masr Al-Awwal... Al-Sayed Omar Makram* was first published in 1937. Against the backdrop of Egypt in the late 18th and early nineteenth century, this biography of Omar Makram traces his leading role in the resistance against Napoleon in 1798. Makram then left Egypt, refusing to have anything to do with the colonisers, and returned only after the French had left the country. Once again, Makram led the popular movement which chose Mohamed Ali as ruler of Egypt, in open defiance of Ottoman wishes.

The second Abu Hadid book reprinted by Dar Al-Hilal is the novel *Ibnat Al-Mamlouk* (Daughter of the Mameluke). Written between 1918 and 1924, and published in 1926, the novel is set in the first decade of the 19th century.

● ***Al-Maghazi* (The Conquests), Salah Fadl. Cairo: Hai'at Qusour Al-Thaqafa, 1997**

Al-Maghazi is a book-length study of popular narratives of the Morisco period, from the fall of Granada in 1492 until the first decade of the 17th century. The Moriscoes — Muslims who did not leave after the fall of Andalusia, some of whom kept their original religion, others becoming Christian — were the principle victims of the fall of Granada, after which Islamic culture was subjected to a constant war of attrition. Salah Fadl presents a valuable analysis of the strategies the Moriscos adopted in their one time home.

● ***Itigahat Al-Bahth Al-Lisani* (Trends in Linguistics), Milka Tvic, tr Saad Maslouh & Wafaa Kamel Ziad. Cairo: Al-Magliss Al-Aala Lil-Thaqafa, 1997**

This hefty tome is a history of linguistics from its embryonic beginnings in in ancient Greece, through the grammatical schools of India, the Renaissance in Europe, all the way to the twentieth century. A large portion of the book is, naturally, devoted to Ferdinand de Saussure's structural linguistics, the school of Prague and the work of Roman Jacobson. A most valuable addition to the Arabic library.

● ***Ru'iat Al-Gabarti Li-Baad Qadaya Asruh* (Al-Gabarti's Views on Some of the Issues of His Day), Ali Barakat. Cairo: General Egyptian Book Organisation, 1997**

The text of *Ru'iat Al-Gabarti Li-Baad Qadaya Asruh* (Al-Gabarti's Views on Some of the Issues of His Day) is almost identical to the author's earlier book, also published by the General Egyptian Book Organisation under the title of "*Ru'iat Al-Gabarti Li-Azmat Al-Haya Al-Fikriya* (Al-Gabarti's Views on the Crisis in Cultural Life). In his introduction to the new edition, however, the author highlights the material he has introduced. Here he has fleshed out the section about the economic and social changes in Al-Gabarti's Egypt, and has focused more closely on Al-Gabarti's criticism of cultural life in his time.

The author also discusses at length Louis Awad's assessment of Al-Gabarti as one of the modernisers of Egyptian thought, and reaches the opposite conclusion, characterising Al-Gabarti as an unrelenting reactionary.

● ***Al-Malak Al-Samit* (The Silent Angel), Heinrich Boll, tr Talaat El-Shaib. Cairo: Hai'at Qusour Al-Thaqafa, 1997**

Heinrich Boll's novel *The Silent Angel*, written between 1949 and 1951, was first published in 1992. Set during the second world war, the novel offers a brave, unflinching portrayal of the horrors witnessed by a generation, tempered by a hint of rebirth.

● ***Bil-Asabie Al-Lati Kal-Misht* (With Comb-like Fingers), Mohamed Sulaiman. Cairo: Hai'at Qusour Al-Thaqafa, Aswat Series, 1997**

Mohamed Sulaiman's most recent poetry collection, *Bil-Asabie Al-Lati Kal-Misht* (With Comb-like Fingers), is one of the first publications in the Aswat Series, supervised and edited by novelist Mohamed El-Bisatie. One of the proponents of the 1970's school of experimental poetry, Sulaiman has previously published four poetry collections and a verse play.

● ***Al-Suoud Ila Al-Maghoul* (Attaining to the Unknown), Mohamed Hamza. Cairo: Al-Gamia Al-Masriya Lil-Nuqqad with the General Egyptian Book Organisation, 1997**

Egyptian practitioners of abstract art are the subject of Mohamed Hamza's *Al-Suoud Ila Al-Maghoul* (Attaining to the Unknown). After an introductory chapter in which he gives a conventional account of the development of European modernism, Hamza moves on to Egyptian abstract artists whom he devides by generation, beginning with the pioneers (including Ramses Younan, Seif Wanli, Mounir Kanaan) before moving on to the new arrivals (including Farouk Hosni, Ahmed Fouad Selim, Naima El-Shishini).

Plain Talk

The tenth anniversary of Tawfiq El-Hakim's death, which is to be celebrated this week, led me to reminisce about the writer and his work. I first encountered El-Hakim when I was in Egypt, on vacation from my post as a cultural attaché in London. In that capacity I had translated a short story by El-Hakim, a humorous tale about his bachelor days, for inclusion in an anthology of Egyptian fiction. I showed the translation to El-Hakim, and he professed himself delighted. It was the first of his writings to be translated into English, and was subsequently rendered into German by Joseph Kalmar.

When I returned permanently to Egypt in 1956 I was persuaded by Youssef El-Sebai to leave my job as a lecturer at the Teachers' College to join him at the Higher Council of Arts and Literature. El-Sebai was successful in gathering around him a coterie of Egypt's leading writers, including Taha Hussein, Abbas El-Aqqad, Hussein Fawzi and Mahmoud Teymour. Tewfik El-Hakim was on the permanent staff of the Council, and it was at this stage that our acquaintance really began.

I well remember how, taking a break from work, we would sit together beneath a particular tree in the garden of the Council. Our conversations covered a lot of ground, from the state of the arts in England to his own experiences in Paris. And always he would be wearing his trade mark blue beret and carrying a stick.

One incident particularly sticks in my mind. I once showed him the text of an article that I was submitting for publication somewhere or other, and he kindly read it. Then he looked up, and told me that I was writing in Arabic as if it was English. It was a lesson I was quick to learn.

Tewfik El-Hakim has always appeared to me to be one of the leading advocates of enlightenment. He made important contributions to the on-going debate about Egyptian identity, a debate that gained in urgency following the 1919 revolution and the emergence of a true, nationalist spirit.

El-Hakim always argued that Egyptian identity was rooted in the nation's ancient as well as Arab heritage, a position for which he was rebuked by Ahmed Hassan El-Zayat, who accused El-Hakim, and others of a like mind, of seeking to transform "our mosques into temples and our churches into alters, our minarets into obelisks and our scientists into priests."

Such attacks, however, did not prevent El-Hakim from evoking the myth of Isis and Osiris in *The Return of the Spirit* as a metaphor for the condition of Egypt. In *The People of the Cave*, a play that was first published in 1933, he similarly evoked Biblical and Qur'anic episodes.

El-Hakim invariably thought in terms of comparisons, and was constantly discussing differences as well as similarities. When Taha Hussein was arguing for links between Greece and Egypt, El-Hakim produced an elegant reply, which I should like to quote in full:

"Why are Egyptian statues covered and Greek statues not? It is a simple observation, but one with important consequences. For everything that is covered and invisible to Egyptians is naked for the Greeks. Everything in Egypt is as invisible as the soul while everything in Greece is treated like matter. Everything in Egypt is as vague as the self while for the Greeks everything is as clear as logic. Egypt comprises the soul and the self, Greece matter and mind."

El-Hakim was as keen to draw boundaries between being Egyptian and being Arab as he was about being Egyptian and being Greek.

Arab art and thought consists, he wrote, "of pleasures of the senses and of matter... It is impossible to find in the whole of Arab civilisation any tendency towards the spirit in the sense in which such tendencies exist in India and in Egypt."

It was, in El-Hakim's opinion, the fusion between being Egyptian and Arab, a fusion of opposites, a marriage of the spiritual and material worlds, of settlement and anxiety, that allowed Egypt to produce literature.

Mursi Saad El-Din

By fair means or foul

Any city has many stories to tell. The memories are ensconced in the names of streets and buildings. But women's names are conspicuously absent from Cairo's landscape, making the infrequent exceptions worthy of interest. **Fayza Hassan** visits two buildings remembered by the name of the women who owned them, and wanders through two intricate stories

Malika Safeyya Mosque

At the southern end of El-Qala'a Street, a small winding lane leads to an exceptionally well-preserved mosque. Built in 1610 by Othman Agha, a freed black eunuch, it became, strangely enough, the property of Malika Safeyya, the grandmother of Sultan Ahmed I. It is said that the beautiful Safeyya, an Albanian, was the favourite of the Ottoman Sultan Murad III.

Murad's affections, however, failed to shield his beloved from the cruelty of his Venetian mother, the Velide Sultan, Nur Banu, who made Safeyya pay for her influence on the sultan, of a resilient disposition, survived the old woman's intrigues and, after the death of Nur Banu in 1583, a death in which she may have had a discreet hand, she became Valide Sultan in her own right, when her favourite son Mohamed III came to power, having arranged for the execution of all his brothers. Safeyya retained her authority until his death in 1603. Uthman, Safeyya's chief black eunuch, was freed when she became Valide Sultan. He left Istanbul for Cairo, where he built a beautiful mosque, endowing the revenues of several villages and houses to pay for its upkeep. He died shortly after its completion. Safeyya, having heard descriptions of the mosque, claimed it for her own, under the pretext that Uthman had not been freed when he had started building the mosque and had therefore acted as her agent. Besides, she told the judge, since he was still her slave, whatever he had owned at the time of his death automatically became her property. The court agreed and the ownership of the mosque was transferred to Safeyya, who named Abdel-Rahman, Uthman's successor, as her agent and made him the guardian of the mosque. This was his reward for not opposing her claim. She "provided 90 pieces of silver per day to pay for a Hanafi jurist, two imams, four *maudhenin* [to call the faithful to prayer], readers, lamplighters, cleaners, gardeners, waterers and a handyman," according to the *Blue Guide Egypt.*

Safeyya's grandson, Ahmed I, the son of Mohamed III, was very different from his father and had no time for his grandmother's scheming. When he became sultan at the age of 14, *he refused to dispose of his brothers and left Safeyya* to play the part of Velide Sultan she had liked so much. Instead, he *confined her to the harem until her death in 1618.*



The many domes of Malika Safeyya Mosque: view from the minaret *photo: Randa Shaath*

Originally the mosque was surrounded with a beautiful fenced-in garden which was entered through several gates. The garden has disappeared. The mosque looks over a tiny square, surrounded by poorly maintained old houses. It is raised on a high, windowless stone base with access by a semi-circular flight of steps. The minaret, of conventional Ottoman design, is set at the front of the building. Several domes are pierced with stucco windows set with coloured glass, and *there are also small circular openings in the central dome. The* most arresting features of the interior are the white marble *mihrab* (niche indicating the direction of prayer) decorated with black, red and yellow marble inlay, and the *minbar* (pulpit) of white marble, with white marble doors. An intricate *mashrabiya* screen leads to the domed room at the northern corner, which was probably reserved for women.

A convoluted lane leads to the main gate of the mosque, the only one remaining. Of Mameluke style, it is the only entrance to what is left of the once well-kept garden, a bit of wasteland abandoned to birds, bees and insects which, in sharp contrast *to the unmistakably urban din of the street below, fill the air* with a pleasantly rustic music.

The Aisha Fahmi Villa

At the beginning of El-Maahad El-Swissri Street in Zamalek, near Abul-Ela Bridge, an imposing red brick and stone villa houses the Centre for Arts. Past the elaborate cast iron gate, a slightly neglected front courtyard features several large sculptures. Originally, however, the building was not planned to promote cultural exchanges. Built as a luxurious European-style mansion, it was intended as the elegant residence of a young man of the Egyptian aristocracy and the woman he loved. Neither were destined to ever live there.

Around the '30s, the rich and handsome Ali Fahmi went to Paris, fell in love and married a French dancer twenty years his senior. He was barely twenty-five. The couple came back to Egypt on their honeymoon and occupied a suite at the Shepheard Hotel until they could move into their new villa, set in an idyllic spot in Zamalek, overlooking the Nile.

Coming back to the hotel one evening, they headed directly to their apartment. A few minutes later, the floor attendant heard a shot. He gave the alarm and soon hotel security guards were knocking down the door. The spectacle which awaited them when they burst into the room was not one they were given to contemplate every day: still gripping the hem of the curtain which separated the two rooms of the suite, Ali Fahmi was lying on the floor, drenched in a pool of his own blood. The bullet in his stomach had been shot by his French wife Marguerite. She still held the gun in her hand.

Marguerite was arrested and the detailed accounts of the tragedy which filled the Egyptian press the next day unleashed public wrath against the Frenchwoman, a schemer who had taken advantage of Ali Fahmi's youth and innocence to lay her hands on a handsome fortune. The situation did not look favourable for Marguerite. She however, was not intimidated. She pleaded self-defence, claiming that her late husband's sexual demands had harmed her health. She produced medical certificates to this effect and asked that her case be given to Morcos Fahmi (no relation to the victim), a lawyer of renown. As a foreigner under the regime of the Capitulations, she was released from custody. In view of the public outcry that had resulted from her crime, Marguerite's friends feared for her safety and advised her to leave Egypt at once, to be tried in France by her own people. She heeded their words of concern, leaving the villa and the whole fortune to Ali's sister Aisha, who lived in the villa with her husband Youssef Wahbi until the 1952 revolution, when the building was sequestrated and assigned to the Ministry of Culture.



Restoration of the facade of the Aisha Fahmi villa, now the Centre for Arts *photo: Nour Sobeih*

Sources:
André Raymond: *Le Caire*, Fayard, Paris (1993)
Veronica Seton-Williams and Peter Stocks: *Blue Guide Egypt*, A&C Black, London (1993)
Andrée Morcos Fahmi: *La Parole et la Défense: Morcos Fahmi (1872-1955)*, CEDEJ, Cairo (1993)

Pot Pourri

A hairy subject

When I was young, I wore my hair in two plaits with a part in the middle. It made me look like a cross between Pollyanna at bed-time, and Heidi. My hair was long and of the unruly, wiry variety, quite fashionable nowadays but a definite embarrassment to its owner then. I needed help to plait what otherwise looked conspicuously like a *lion's mane. This gave my family a long-lasting hold on* me. If I did not toe the line, I would be left to battle with the inordinately recalcitrant strands on my own, until I realised that it was easier to curb my equally unpleasant nature and did as I had been told.

One morning, I eventually turned twenty-one and, with a scream of triumph, performed my first totally independent act: I threw all the wire brushes and hair pins in the garbage, then went secretly to the hairdresser's for the very first haircut of my life. This was the strongest manifestation of my budding rebellious disposition (I had not yet married against my parents' will). Right after the cut, my hair went into shock. It turned sheep-like and woolly, and changed colour. From dirty yellow, it became mousy grey. The waves contracted into knots. It defied gravity. Sweet and sorry as I may have been in asking for their forgiveness, neither my mother nor my grandmother could do more than cluck and shake their heads in dismay. Such a disaster needed professional attention, they finally decided. They made an appointment with a hairdresser of great renown.

From that day on, instead of allowing me a degree of freedom, my reckless act placed me in dual bondage. Only the hairdresser could tame the mop, and only my parents could pay for his complicated ministrations. The more panic I showed at the prospect of having to live with the problem, the more restrictions were placed on my freedom by both parties. Hair-straightening operations were still at an experimental stage, to say the least. It was in no way one of these do-it-yourself affairs. I spent most of my time and more than twice my weekly allowance at the beauty salon. Litmus paper could not have been more sensitive than I was to the changes in mood of the two entities who now ruled my life. Will they give me the money? Will he be able to fix it? were the two questions which haunted my every waking hour. I was advised to abstain from swimming and going in the sun. Perspiration was my undoing. I had to ban exercise and only engaged in slow dancing in well-ventilated premises. When dancing cheek to cheek was all the rage, I kept my head rigidly apart, lest my partner sweat on my curls. I slept on my back, with a scarf or a net carefully tied around my head, and avoided rainy countries in my travels.

Times change, of course, and so does fashion. Besides, *a change of life-style made all these hairy worries redundant.* There were times when I forgot to check if every strand of my coiffure was in place, others when I could not afford to do much about it anyway. I remember one particular day where my hair depressed me so much that I cut it right there and then, in the middle of the night, with the kitchen scissors, down to less than a couple of centimetres. I looked so ridiculous that I couldn't help hooting with laughter, and woke up my *husband with my shrieks of hysterical mirth. The next* day, he was only too happy to pay for the most expensive hairdresser in the city, who was certainly a far cry cheaper than the best psychiatrist, he must have thought. Anyway, there was little that could be done at this point to repair my new crew cut and, in time, I grew to like it. I kept it for several years. I also learned that one's hair is not as important as it is cracked up to be, and I now wear whatever style and colour please my nearest and dearest.

Last year, I visited my daughter in the States. We had not seen each other for a long time. I found her beautiful. I wanted her to like me too. "Mother," she said ominously, "I don't want to hurt you, but your hair... the colour, the cut; it is absolutely ghastly." I abstained from telling her that this was the way my mother liked me. We went to the hairdresser. She chose the colour and the cut and finally declared herself satisfied. We had a wonderful holiday. When I came back, my mother gasped in horror. Her first words were: "Your hair... I don't want to hurt you but — the colour, the cut, it's all unbelievably unbecoming." We went to the hairdresser, but my hair took a long time to grow. Finally my mother, only last week, uttered the magic words: "Your hair," she said, "looks great now." It is exactly the way it was when I left for the States last year. And in a week's time, I will be going to visit my daughter.

Fayza Hassan

Sufra Dayma

Syrian *labaneya*

Ingredients:
1/2kg beef or veal leg cutlets (*moza*)
2kg yoghurt
1 onion (cut in 4)
1 tsp. crushed garlic
1/2 cup boiled rice
1 tbsp. corn flour
1 tsp. dried mint, or:
1 tbsp. finely chopped green coriander
Butter ghee
Salt + pepper + cinnamon + cardamom seeds

Method:
Fry the meat cutlets in butter ghee until golden. Add the onion and all the spices. Add hot water to cover it and leave to cook, covered, over medium heat. In another pan, add the yoghurt, the corn flour dissolved in some water, and some salt. Cook over medium heat stirring constantly with a wooden spatula in one direction. Add the stock, the cutlets and the rice, constantly stirring until you bring it to a boil. Add the garlic and mint, stir them in for a further five (5) minutes. You can add the coriander instead of the mint, but then you must mix it with the garlic and gently fry it in some butter until tender. Add them to the *labaneya* for a couple of minutes, stirring them in, then remove from heat. Serve with rice, fresh green vegetables and a *fattoush* salad.

Moushira Abdel-Malek

Restaurant review

Money for old rope

Andrew Steele fishes for compliments

'Give them enough rope...' goes the old adage, and there is certainly more than enough of the stuff adorning the walls of Abou Keer, the latest incumbent of the space above Chilli's in Heliopolis. The floorboards are unvarnished and scattered with sawdust. There are numerous examples of marine life, preserved and stuffed, hanging here, there and everywhere; puff fish and vicious-looking conga eels by the dozen. The motif is overwhelmingly 'salty', not to mention 'seadog'.

We were greeted by a woman in a charming gold and black nautical *galabiya* (if such a garment exists), presented with menus (Arabic only, I'm afraid), and shown to a pleasingly large table for two.

The salads, it has to be said, were rather good. The tahina was thick and drizzled with extra virgin olive oil. The tomato salad comprised ripe-to-bursting plum tomatoes, sectioned and stuffed with thin layers of garlic, coriander and *blindingly* hot chilli paste. Fortunately, at this juncture, our orange juices arrived to soothe the burn. The starters were more than a little out of sync — mine arriving as my partner finished his — and really rather disappointing. The seafood cocktail was drowned in that certain blend of cocktail sauce that was mystifyingly popular at '70s dinner parties. *Heavy on the ketchup, the seafood* was identifiable by shape and texture rather than taste. My Crabs Abou Keer were served in the shell; crab meat and seabass minced together in a far too eggy hollandaise sauce. it was the sort of dish that can make one a little queasy, especially when combined with a rather graphic CNN reportage on the horrors of landmines which flickered silently on the wall-mounted television sets.

Surely the main course would be better? The Pirate's Sword was my order of choice; char-grilled cubes of sea-bass twixt slices of onion, tomato and capsicum, served with a mound of rice. Perhaps it had been frozen, for the fish tasted, quite frankly, of nothing whatsoever. The rice was dry as a dry dock, crunchy even. The Choice from the Fisherman's Net featured a whole, fried jumbo prawn, a whole, fried red snapper, a large slab of grouper fillet and a little pile of fried calimari. Again, the grouper was terminally low on savour, the prawn watery, the calimari average to rubbery, and the red snapper? Delicious was the verdict. One out of four ain't good.

Perhaps it was an off day. Perhaps the seasonal ban on deep sea fishing from the northern coast affected the quality of Abou Keer's catch. One can but opine. At LE124 for lunch for two with two orange juices (Abou Keer is dry), it's not a bargain venue. No yo ho ho. No bottle of rum.

Abou Keer, 18 El Tharwa St. Heliopolis Tel 417 7418

Al-Ahram Weekly

Crossword

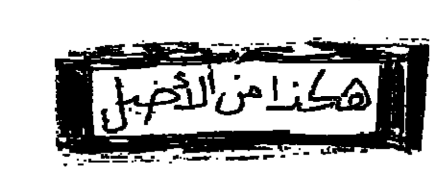
By Samia Abdennour

Across
1. Cupid (4)
5. Disgorges; retches (5)
10. Pole marking start or finish of race; official conveyance of parcels (4)
14. Left-hand side of ship; place of refuge; Portuguese wine (4)
15. Senseless 95)
16. Piedmont wine (4)
17. Shakespearean character (4)
18. Kinswomen (5)
19. Look at intently (4)
20. The gray Grus grus, pl. (6)
22. Literature, psychology, philosophy, etc. 94)
24. Silver, L. Abb. (3)
25. Snug retreats (5)
27. Its wood was formerly used for bows, now cabinet-making, 2 wds. (7)
29. Sash (3)
31. In favour of (3)
32. Bitumen; sailor (3)
33. Cabbage trees (3)
34. Fermenting agent (5)
37. hammer used to call meeting to order 95)
41. A piece of news (4)
43. Equality 93)
44. Manufacture (4)
45. Famous Lebanese tree (5)
47. An aqualung (5)
50. pasture (3)
51. Youth (3)
53. Roundish lump of coal (3)
54. Short for "telepathy" (3)
55. Munched (7)
59. An ass of SW Asia (5)
61. Fishing line (3)
62. Flat-bottomed boat (4)
64. Drink of the gods (6)
67. Applications; employs (4)
69. Having no trace of life (5)
71. Long country walk with rucksacks (4)
72. Perplex (4)
73. Impulse transmitter (5)
74. Miss Blyton (4)
75. Broken to harness (4)
76. Dice threes (5)
77. Japanese coins (4)

DOWN
1. Heroic long poem (4)
2. Explosion; guffaw (4)
3. Systematised (9)
4. 6.35 kg or 134 lb (5)
5. An Arab coin (7)
6. United Nations University, abb. (3)
7. Japanese syllabaries (4)
8. Liberty to come in (5)
9. The last six lines of a sonnet (7)
10. Step (3)
11. The ambition of all actors (5)
12. Gape (5)
13. Colour slightly (5)
21. Perceive (4)
23. Booty carried off by burglars (4)
26. Washing agents (5)
28. Electrically powered passenger vehicle (4)
29. Pertaining to ears (4)
30. Detach with teeth (4)
35. Bag-like cavity (3)
36. Open vehicle for carrying freight (5)
38. February 14th occasion (9)
39. Supplements (4)
40. Hop (4)
42. Soft chalky rock (4)
46. Slight blows (4)
48. Returns cheque for insufficient funds (7)
49. Skillful (4)
52. Gradually pour off liquid from one container to another with disturbing sediment (6)
55. Hard dry scrap of bread (5)
56. Flowery perennial garden plant (5)
57. Roman building for musical performances (5)
58. Sleeper, sl. (5)
60. Distresses (5)
63. Dressed (4)
65. Similar to (4)
66. Crimson, cherry, etc. (4)
68. Weather directions (3)
70. A climbing plant (3)

CLUB ARROW CRAM
ROLE COOPS HALO
OCTAL MIA TANGO
PU REPELLERS AN
GINO ROTA
TORNADO INTENSE
AGOG SINCE NOLT
WHO LOT MAD
SAVE BEGUN SAKE
EMENDED SAMPLER
SLIM NARY
CP INANIMATE AS
HALVE ODE TAINT
OGEE OVOLI DONE
PEON HALTS SNAP

Last week's solution





subject

هكذا من الأصل

Montazah caters for all tastes of summer holidaymakers

photos: Al-Ahram

Italian and French period furniture graces the lobby of the Salamlek Palace

Beaches, palaces and what is possibly the most beautiful garden in all of Egypt. **Rehab Saad** samples the unique magic of Montazah, and visits the Salamlek Palace, once part of the Egyptian royal family's residence in Alexandria and which has been restored and converted into a five-star hotel

Royal beaches

Montazah is holidaymakers' paradise: public and private beaches are ready to receive waves of sun-worshipers; the ex-royal gardens welcomingly beckon visitors to enjoy beautiful greenery 24 hours a day; the Centre for Sea Sports and the Sports Centre provide all the necessary facilities for sea and sports lovers; and free playgrounds equipped with swings and slides enable children to enjoy Montazah also.

Yet Montazah is not only a resort for holidays and recreation. It is also part of Egypt's history. The sprawling, walled compound, situated on the Mediterranean Sea in the eastern part of Alexandria, was begun by the Khedive Abbas Helmi II in 1892, when he built the Salamlek Palace to serve as the men's quarters of the Montazah complex. This palace has since been renovated and turned into a five-star hotel. For many people, it is a great attraction to stay in the palace where the khedive himself lived.

As time went on, the royal family added further developments to the site. Among these is the main summer residence of the royal family, Al-Montazah Palace, which is situated on a mound overlooking a beautiful bay and beach. Its vast gardens cover an area of 370 feddans and include rare plants and various types of palm and other trees.

During World War I, Montazah became a Red Cross Hospital. E M Forster, in his guide book of Alexandria (1922), wrote that "thousands of convalescent soldiers passed through it and will never forget the beauty and comfort that they found there." Indeed, Forster was captivated by this Mediterranean paradise, which was at that time a property of the royal family. "The scenery is unique in [Montazah] and of greatest beauty," he wrote.

When King Farouk came to the throne, he built a bridge to join the palace to a part of the gardens called the "Island of Dreams", a fairy-tale site covered by 13 feddans of exotic plants and Byzantine-style statues. There is also a delightful kiosk where the king and his friends used to enjoy their afternoon tea. King Farouk is also responsible for building the famous clock of Montazah, from which toy soldiers appear each time the clock strikes the hour.

Montazah was opened to the public after the revolution of 1952, which overthrew the monarchy. Visitors are permitted to enter various parts of the site, including the "Island of Dreams", the bridge and Salamlek Palace. However, entry to the king's palace is reserved for the exclusive use of President Mubarak, who uses it to hold meetings with foreign dignitaries.

Fortunately, this summer's visitors to Montazah will be able to enjoy the scenery of the gardens and the sea better than ever. The Montazah Company recently finished implementing a plan to remove the various concrete encroachments on green areas. According to officials, the licences of most of the buildings and restaurants that were built in Montazah without consideration for the overall appearance of the area ended in 1996, and they were all removed.

"All the shops situated in the area of the famous clock of Montazah were removed. Moreover, the tower and the clock were restored. The area has returned to the way it was," said Major General Ibrahim Hasabou, chairman of the board of the Montazah Company. He explained that people can find restaurants anywhere, but that "they come here to enjoy the beauty of the sea and the unique plants. We have to restore the unique style of Montazah. How can I destroy the gardens by allowing Wimpy, Tikka and Pizza Hut to have branches here? This is completely inappropriate," he said.

The company has set up a trade centre in Montazah that includes cafeterias, restaurants and shops selling leather products, clothes, glassware and other items without ruining the character of Montazah.

Preserving the character of Montazah is also the concern of the Ministry of Tourism. Through the Tourist Development Authority (TDA), the ministry undertook a study aimed at finding ways to preserve the historical character of the summer residence of the defunct royal family and to develop the gardens. The study has suggested the restoration of buildings and the installation of road signs, lamp-posts, garbage bins, benches, fences and flower pots, all of which will be made in a style that would mesh with the surrounding environment.

Not to be missed in Montazah is the plant nursery and the greenhouse. Many tourist groups come to Montazah for the sole purpose of visiting them. The greenhouse has exotic plants that have thrived since the time of King Fouad, Farouk's father. It supplies all the plants needed in the gardens and there is also a surplus for sale.

Hasabou stressed, "We do not have special preparations for the summer. We are ready all year round." Without a doubt, this slice of Egypt's 19th-20th century history is thriving as a major tourist attraction that has a bright future ahead.

Fit for a king

Lobby doors swish shut, and the blazing heat of an Alexandrian summer day vanishes. In the air-conditioned calm of the entrance hall, the visitor instinctively pauses to take in the surroundings. But these are no ordinary surroundings; the gold crown of the former Egyptian royal family and royal photo-portraits adorn the walls: Italian and French period furniture graces the lobby; from somewhere within, the strains of a group of violins impart an air of elegance and refinement. This is the Salamlek Palace or men's quarters of Al-Montazah Palace, formerly the summer residence of the Egyptian royal family, now an exclusive hotel for society's elite.

The palace was built in 1892 by Khedive Abbas Helmi II, the founder of Montazah, in Austrian style, in order, so it was said, to please his Austrian mistress. It was then handed down to King Fouad I and finally to King Farouk, the last of the royal dynasty before the Egyptian revolution of 1952. After King Farouk was forced to flee the country, the palace was abandoned, until turned into a hotel by an Egyptian company. It was, however, poorly run, attracted few guests and the once grand edifice slowly began to crumble.

In 1987, the Egyptian San Giovanni Company for Tourism, Investment and Hotels took over the property, and over a period of 10 years restored the palace, which opened in January this year. Costing approximately LE25 million, the restorers used old photographs, historical references and brought in experts to preserve or recreate the original look of the palace.

The numerous pictures and photographs in the hotel lobby of the royal family, many of which are originals, are an arresting sight. They include an original oil portrait of Khedive Abbas Helmi II, the founder of Montazah, photographs of the first wedding party of King Farouk and Queen Farida and another photograph of his second marriage to Queen Nariman. Other photos include the engagement party of the Shah of Iran Mohamed Reda Pahlavi and the Egyptian princess Fawzia, sister of King Farouk, as well as a photo of Mohamed Ali, the founder of the dynasty.

Now transformed into a bar, restaurant and coffee shop, the various royal reception rooms still retain original fittings and objects from a more decadent past. The Al-Fouad Bar, formerly the waiting room for the king's visitors before they entered his office, contains an original wooden table where King Farouk used to keep his cigarettes and cigars. To further enhance the atmosphere of authenticity, the plates used at the hotel bear the letter "F" for Farouk, instead of the San Giovanni crest.

The hotel only receives individual guests — no package tours allowed. "[The hotel] is for the elite traveller. It is a special hotel for special guests. And because Alexandria is the main summer resort for Egyptians and Arabs, these people constitute the majority of our guests," says Wasim Mohieddin, chairman of the board of San Giovanni.

This two-storey hotel, with 20 suites (no rooms) overlooking the sea, charges from LE600 to LE3,000 per night. Every suite has been designed individually; some have been furnished in the English style, others with a French or Greek theme. But modern facilities are in no way lacking; all suites are equipped with telephone, fax, safes and a meeting table. The most expensive suite in the hotel is the Mawlana — five rooms with a large terrace.

Holy Family on the Egyptian map

A map of the Flight of the Holy Family into Egypt is being prepared by the Coptic Orthodox Church; meanwhile one of the lesser-known sites is proving to be one of the most important, as **Samir Naoum** reports

On 1 June, celebrations marking the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt are held at sites which they visited throughout the country.

One of the most important of these places is Sakha which lies almost 135km north of Cairo, between the Rosetta and Damietta branches of the Nile.

The Holy Family is believed to have stayed there for a full week. The name Sakha derives from Birkha Isous, or Jesus' foot, and the site was, according to 15th century Egyptian historian Al-Makrizi, equal to Jerusalem in historical importance.

Today, Sakha's church, where the old Monastery of El-Maghtas once stood, has become an important pilgrimage site. Christians from all over the world come on 1 June to commemorate the Flight in the same way that they go to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. It is said that the Virgin Mary appeared in the Sakha church, and the celebrations have become known as the Feast of the Apparition of the Virgin Mary.

In the 15th century, the monastic area was destroyed and Sakha temporarily lost its importance as a Coptic site until the new church was built, using whatever remained of the earlier building. One remnant was the sanctuary screen of the central apse which is inlaid with mother-of-pearl. It is dedicated to the Holy Virgin and is believed to be one of the oldest in Egypt. Above the doorway is written "Peace be on the altar of the Holy Father, dedicated to the Virgin Mary in Sakha in 1589 of the Coptic calendar."

The altar to the left is dedicated to Saint George and on the wooden sanctuary screen the date 1591 of the Coptic calendar is recorded. The altar to the right is dedicated to the Archangel Michael and, again, the sanctuary screen is inlaid with mother-of-pearl.

The church is described by the local priest as being in the shape of Noah's Ark, 25m long and 15m wide.

In 1988 excavations were started in a house next to the church and a large block of stone was found. A child's foot was imprinted on one side of the stone, while, on the other side, the word "God" was inscribed. An old manuscript in the library of Deir (Monastery) Al-Muharraq in the Western Desert reveals the story of the stone. According to tradition, the Virgin Mary was thirsty when she reached Sakha and as the child Jesus touched the stone with his foot, water sprouted and his foot left an imprint.



One of the icons depicted in Sakha Church

In the 13th century the sacred relics were hidden in the monastery's courtyard for safety and there they remained until they were excavated.

There are a number of icons in the church, the most noteworthy being a painting on leather depicting the creation of the world and events up until the Ascension of the Virgin.

The columns at the church entrance belong to the original building. They were unearthed in the 1960s and used in the new church. Other items of historical interest on display inside the church include candlesticks, a silver paten and chalice used for communion which date to 1213 of the Coptic calendar and a handwritten Bible, as well as crosses and crowns dating from the 18th century. There is also a manuscript of the order of Sunday prayers and an ancient stone baptism basin.

The Holy Family passed through more than 20 sites on their way from Gaza through northern Sinai including Arish, Farma (near Port Said), and then across the Delta to Sakha. They then moved to Wadi Al-Natrun and, via Heliopolis and Old Cairo, to Upper Egypt as far as Assiut, a journey that took them almost three years. The longest time was spent in the Al-Muharraq Monastery in the Western Desert.

A map of the places visited by the Holy Family, which is being produced by the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Ministry of Tourism, will soon be available.

The minister of tourism, Mamdouh El-Beltagui, said that the map will cover all the sites and feature, together with photos, in a guidebook which will be distributed among tourist companies and tour operators to encourage religious tourism to Egypt.

Site tours

Buses

Super Jet, East Delta and West Delta buses operate throughout Egypt.

Super Jet

Super Jet stations are located in Almaza (Heliopolis), Tahrir, Giza, Ramsis Street and Cairo Airport. Buses travel to Alexandria, Port Said, Hurghada and Sinai. Tel. 772-663.

Cairo-Alexandria
Services almost every half hour from 5.30am to 10pm, from Tahrir, then Giza, Almaza and the airport. Tickets LE19 until 9pm; LE21 thereafter; from the airport LE24 until 5pm; LE30 thereafter. A VIP bus with phone access leaves Almaza at 7.15am. Tickets from Almaza LE28; from the airport LE32 each way.

Cairo-Marsa Matrouh
Services at 7am departure and 7pm return from Almaza and Tahrir Square. Tickets LE36.
Cairo-Sidi Abdel-Rahman
Services at 6.30am, 7am, 8am, 9am and 3.45pm. Tickets LE32
Cairo-Port Said
Services every half hour from 6am to 8am; then 9am, 10am, 3pm, and 4.30pm, from Almaza, then Ramsis Street. Tickets LE15 each way.

Alexandria-Port Said
Service 6.45am, from Ramleh Square in Alexandria. Departs Port Said 3.30pm. Tickets LE22 each way.

Cairo-Hurghada
Services 8am and 2pm, from Tahrir, then Giza and Almaza. Departs Hurghada noon and 5pm. Tickets LE40 until 5pm, LE45 thereafter, both each way.

Alexandria-Hurghada
Service 8pm, from Ramleh Square, Alexandria. Departs Hurghada 2.30pm. Tickets LE60 each way.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh
Service 11pm, from Tahrir, then Almaza. Departs Sharm El-Sheikh 11pm. Tickets LE50 each way.

East Delta Bus Company
Buses travel to North/South Sinai
Sinai, Suez and Ismailia. Buses to Ismailia and Suez depart from Qulali (near Ramsis Square), Almaza and Tagnid Square (near Heliopolis). Buses to North and South Sinai depart from the Sinai bus station at Abbassiya Square. Tel. 482-4753.

Cairo-Ismailia
Services every 45 minutes from 6.30am to 6pm, from Qulali, then Almaza and Tagnid Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE5.75; air-conditioned bus LE5.25, one way.

Cairo-Suez
Services every half hour from 6am to 7pm, from Qulali, then Almaza and Tagnid Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE5.75; air-conditioned bus LE5, one way.

Cairo-El-Arish
Services every hour from 7.30am to 4pm, from Qulali, then Almaza and Tagnid Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE21; air-conditioned bus LE13, one way.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh
Services every 45 min. from 7am to 6.30pm from Abbassiya, then Almaza. Tickets morning LE27; evening LE40, one way.

Cairo-Nuweiba
Service 8am, from Abbassiya, then Almaza. Tickets deluxe bus LE31.

West Delta Bus Company

Stations at Tahrir and Almaza. Tel. 243-1846.

Cairo-Hurghada
Services 9am, noon, 3pm, 10.30pm, 10.45pm and 11pm. Tickets LE30 one way.

Cairo-Safaga
Services 9am and 3pm. Tickets LE35 one way.

Cairo-Qusseir
Service 10pm. Tickets LE38 one way.

Cairo-Luxor
Service 9am. Tickets LE35 one way.

Cairo-Aswan
Service 5pm. Tickets LE50 one way.

Trains

Trains run to Alexandria, Port Said, Luxor and Aswan, from Ramsis Station. Tel. 147 or 575-3555.

Cairo-Luxor-Aswan
"French" deluxe trains with sleepers
Services to Luxor and Aswan 7.40pm and 9pm (reaching Luxor 6.40 am and 8am, Aswan 8.40am and 10am). Tickets to Luxor LE294 for foreigners and LE129 for Egyptians, to Aswan LE300 for foreigners; LE141 for Egyptians.
"Spanish" deluxe trains without sleepers
Services to Luxor and Aswan 6.45pm, 8.45pm and 9.45pm. Tickets to Luxor: first class LE51; second class LE31. Tickets to Aswan: first class LE63; second class LE37.

Cairo-Alexandria
"Torbini" trains
VIP train: Service 8am. Tickets first class LE32 with a meal; LE22 without a meal.
Standard trains: Services 9am, 11am, noon, 5pm and 7pm. Tickets first class LE22; second class LE17.
"French" trains
Services hourly from 6am to 10.30pm. Tickets first class LE20; second class LE12.

Cairo-Port Said
Services 6.20am and 8.45am. Tickets first class LE45; second class LE26.

EgyptAir

There are between two and five domestic flights daily. Check EgyptAir: Adly 390-0999; Opera 390-2444; or Hilton 772410

Cairo-Aswan
Tickets LE351 for Egyptians, LE1143 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Cairo-Luxor
Tickets LE259 for Egyptians, LE829 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Cairo-Hurghada
Tickets LE279 for Egyptians, LE898 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh
Tickets LE287 for Egyptians, LE945 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Egyptian tourism on the Internet

Here are some useful addresses on the Internet, including tourism magazines, archaeology and travel agency programmes:

http:// www.idsc.gov.eg/links.htm is an address through which you can access other useful tourism addresses on the Internet. Here they are:

http://www.idsc.gov.eg/tourism is the address of Egypt's Tourism Net which provides directories of Egypt's hotels, restaurants, cruise lines, travel agents, transportation companies and tourist attractions.
Egypt's tourism net is a part of many home pages (culture, health, environment, etc) created by the IDSC as a part of the nation's Information Highway.

http://163.121.10.41/tourism is the key to Egypt Has it All, where Egypt's tourist sites, such as the Red Sea, Cairo, Luxor, Aswan, the Sinai, Alexandria, oases and ETA offices abroad are described. The magazine also contains colour photographs of Egypt.

http://www.memphis.edu/egypt/egypt.htm is the address of the University of Memphis, and describes their projects in Egypt.

http://www-ceg.ceg.vivc.edu/~haggag/travel.html is the address of Egypt's Tours and Travel, which organises packages for people who want to take quality tours. It is an Egyptian tour operator, which specialises in tours within Egypt, the Holy Land and the Middle East.

http://www.geocities.com/TheTropics/7210 is the address of The Curse of the Pharaohs. It includes photographs of ancient tombs and temples.

http://www.ezy.be/horses is the address of The Arabian Horse Worldwide Guide. This guide aims to promote the world's most beautiful and versatile horse — the Arabian.

http://intercoz.com/egypt is a 2,000-page magazine, published by the Ministry of Tourism, where all Egyptian tourist sites are listed and described.
http://watt.seas.virginia.EDU/~aoa5u /city is the address of the magazine *Cairo Scene*, Cairo's first on-line art and entertainment guide. It is the most up-to-date source on where to go and what to do in Cairo. It has also sections for books and the latest CD's besides proposed places to visit like Wadi Rayan.
http://watt.seas.virginia.EDU/~aoa5u is the site of Exodus Egypt, a daily site covering home news including political, social and cultural events

Sunny summer deals

Hotels and travel agencies are offering special prices for summer. Prices are valid for Egyptians and foreign residents

Travel agencies

Sobel Travel is offering trips to Europe and the USA as of July. Trips to Paris go for LE2,700 including accommodation in three-star hotels, breakfast included, as well as internal transportation and sightseeing tours.

Another 15-day trip combines Paris and London for LE4,750 including accommodation in three-star hotels. A 14-day trip to the USA costs LE7,900 including visits to Los Angeles, Las Vegas, Orlando and Miami. The price includes accommodation and internal transportation.

Hotels

Cairo
Pyramids Park Hotel, an Inter-Continental global partner resort, is offering a single room for LE160 and a double for LE180 including service fees and taxes, 20 per cent discount on all food items, free shuttle bus to city centre and free use of the exercise room. Prices are valid until October.
Sonesta Hotel Cairo is offering double rooms for LE220 and singles for LE200 including breakfast and taxes.

South Sinai
Cataract Lilium is offering a double room for LE99 per person including breakfast, services and taxes.

Sharm El-Sheikh

Sonesta Beach Resort Sharm El-Sheikh is offering a rate of LE260 for double rooms and LE190 for single rooms including breakfast, taxes and services.

Red Sea

Sonesta Beach Resort Hurghada is offering a rate of LE266 for double rooms and LE210 for singles on half-board basis including taxes and service charge.

Compiled by ***Rehab Saad***

Al-Ahram: A Diwan of contemporary life



Since its birth in 1906, the Egyptian student movement has had spurts generated by academic grievances or political developments. Its first action was a strike by law school students prompted by purely academic considerations. But it quickly mushroomed into a nationwide protest action that embraced students of other colleges as well as secondary school students who joined in sympathy. Despite protestations to the contrary, the student action had a political tinge because a senior British official was held responsible for the harsh measures taken by the Ministry of Education. Dr Yunan Labib Rizk tells the story from reports in *Al-Ahram*


Hussein Fakhri


Abdel-Aziz Fahmi


Ahmed Lutfi El-Sayed

The notorious incident of 9 February 1946, in which scores of students met their death on Abbas Bridge, is commemorated nationwide as a peak in the national student movement. Few are aware, however, that precisely 40 years previously, in February 1906, Egyptian schools and universities saw their first general student strike.

The massive strike — extending to preparatory and higher educational institutes from Cairo to Alexandria — had inauspicious beginnings. On 26 February, *Al-Ahram* announced, "Students of the Royal College of Law have declared a strike. The students claim, firstly, that the school has banned four students from taking the final examinations this year on the grounds of their poor attendance record, and, secondly, that the examinations board has required students to be examined on the subject matter of their previous academic year. As students have only learned of this regulation recently, they will not have sufficient time to study for an exam covering both this year's and the previous year's work. The striking students also have a list of other demands which has been submitted to the dean of the college by a delegation they have elected."

The following day's edition of *Al-Ahram* reported that 275 students from the College of Law — virtually the entire student body — had rallied in Ezbekiya Gardens with a list of nine demands. Among other things they demanded that the four students should be permitted to sit the final exams and that the exams should cover only the current scholastic year.

The unprecedented student demonstration in Ezbekiya, which was a watershed for student activism, also set two other precedents. Firstly, the students appealed to their colleagues in the schools of engineering and medicine "to join us in our strike so that if the dean rejects the petition of the students of the College of Law, students from the colleges of engineering and medicine will refuse to return to classes." Secondly, the law students declared that they would not return to classes until all their demands were met.

Faced with this organisational spirit that sought to generate a broad-based student movement, the Ministry of Education decided to take firm action. On the same day of the Ezbekiya rally, it posted the following announcement on the college doors: "The Ministry of Education, in light of the reports it has received from the College of Law, has decided to suspend classes from today until the end of the week. Classes will resume on Saturday morning, 3 March 1906. Students who fail to attend on that morning at precisely 8am will be expelled from the student body."

The ministry, and more precisely the British secretary of the Ministry of Education, Mr Dunlop, whom the students held responsible for all their troubles, thus issued its declaration of war. As ever, *Al-Ahram* was on hand to cover the various skirmishes between the two sides, contributing its commentary and offering encouragement and advice to the students.

The response of the students from the colleges of medicine and engineering was amazingly prompt. The following day they submitted petitions to their respective deans, asking them to lend their backing to the students of the college of law, "or else we will join them in their strike." A pleasing surprise was to come from another direction. When the law students held their second rally in Ezbekiya on the morning of 27 February, they found waiting for them representatives from the students of the school of agriculture and a large number of students from the craft and trade schools. The movement had spread beyond the higher educational institutes to include students from the technical and preparatory schools.

Second-year students from the Royal Institute for Technical Training and the Tawfiqiya Preparatory School assembled in support of the striking law students in Ezbekiya. *Al-Ahram* reports: "The students then decided to elect three members from each class to write three petitions on their behalf. The first is to be sent to the inspector of the Ministry of Education, the second to the dean of the Tawfiqiya School and the third to the dean of the Royal Institute for Technical Training."

Given these precipitate developments, it was only natural that the national press should step in. As might be expected, the pro-British *Al-Muqattam* was critical of the students while the nationalist *Al-Liwa'*, owned and operated by Mustafa Kamel, espoused the new movement as a sign of a awakening of the nationalist consciousness.

Al-Ahram, for its part, took a middle road. On the one hand, it considered the events a healthy sign of a spirited and active youth "who refuse to abide by what they deem to be injustice and it pleases us to see them demand their rights and call the attention of the ministry to the flaws in the educational system." On the other hand, the newspaper counsels the students against the strike and abandoning their lessons.

Evidently the authorities would refuse to heed such sane counsel. In March 1906 the minister of education issued a decree stipulating: "All student demonstrations and rallies calling upon students to absent themselves from class or to leave the school premises will result in the expulsion of those students who participate in the demonstrations. No student who has been suspended during the current scholastic year will be re-accepted in the school. If, for exceptional reasons and upon the recommendation of the dean, suspended students are admitted again in the next academic year, these students will be obliged to join the level in which they were registered at the time of their suspension."

Most of those who read this document knew immediately who was behind the decision. They would have readily recognised the Minister of Education Hussein Fakhri's signature for what it was — a rubber stamp legitimising the policy of the secretary-general of the ministry, Britain's Douglas Dunlop.

Naturally, the students' response was to hold another rally, which grouped students from the schools of law, engineering, agriculture and medicine. The protesters elected two delegations, one to seek the approval of the Ministry of Justice for their demands and the second to ask the Ministry of Education for an explicit response to their demands.

Reports that their movement had spread beyond Cairo must have bolstered their resolve. Evidently, news reached the demonstrators that the dean of the Ras Al-Tin College in Alexandria complained to the Ministry of Education that the students in that institute were entertaining the notion of demonstrating in support for their colleagues in Cairo if the ministry refused to meet their demands.

A turning point in the student movement came on 2 March 1906. On that day the strikers assembled in the Arab Representation Building in order to hear about the authorities. response to their demands. An indication of the size of the movement was the fact that the assembly hall was filled with reporters and major political figures. Among those present were Ahmed Lutfi El-Sayed, Abdel-Aziz Fahmi, Hassan Abdel-Razeq and Mohamed Abu Nasr, all prominent public personalities and influential lawyers who had taken it upon themselves to defend the incipient student movement.

The most significant discussion centred around solidarity within the student movement. Ahmed Lutfi El-Sayed told the assembly: "You are men of the pen and the spoken word, not men of the sword and truncheon. If, therefore, you wish to see your demands met, you must do so through peaceful protest, not by force, violence or illegal acts." Then the man who would eventually become known as "the professor of the generation" and, in the twenties, would be responsible for the administration of Cairo University, under whose banner the other schools would go on strike concluded, "The students of the College of Law should set as their primary condition for returning to classes that the Ministry of Education rescind its decision to suspend four of their colleagues."

While this meeting was in progress, students from Cairo's secondary schools rallied in Ezbekiya Garden. An *Al-Ahram* reporter rushed to the scene to cover the rally. He reported that in one speech after another students were urging their colleagues to submit their grievances to the deans of their schools. He added that the speeches reflected bitter acrimony against the secretary-general of the Ministry of Education.

It was inevitable that the situation would escalate when some of the leaders of the National Party attempted to fire the students ardour.

The Ministry of Education's response the following day was severe. It expelled four students from the College of Law and 17 from the College of Agriculture. While the action would outrage many students, it gave many others reason to rethink their position, particularly as several of the lawyers who had risen to their defence advised the students not to carry the strike any further. Parental pressure was no less a significant factor.

The change in attitude was reflected in a statement produced by the students on the Friday preceding the date specified in the ministry's ultimatum. After having consulted with their lawyers, the students wrote, "We have unanimously decided that the promise made by the adviser to the Ministry of Justice to personally consider our demands from the technical academic standpoint and to use his good offices with the Ministry of Education in order to meet our demands from the administrative standpoint is a sufficient guarantee toward the fulfilment of our aspirations. We have therefore resolved to return to our classes tomorrow morning and we are confident that the Ministry of Education will accept the mediation of the adviser to the Ministry of Justice and examine our grievances with the eye of a merciful father."

All law students resumed regular attendance of their classes in the hopes that the ministry would revoke the suspension of their seven classmates. However, Lord Cromer's instructions to the dean were most discouraging. The British High Commissioner said that the students' return to classes was unconditional. He also said that the expulsion of the 56 students from the School of Agriculture was final and irreversible — "an outrage" in the words of *Al-Ahram*.

In light of the disappointments experienced by the students of the higher educational institutes, students from the other schools were reluctant to end their strike. Once again they met in Ezbekiya Gardens, "in which a large throng of students from the secondary schools and training academies had assembled, along with many ordinary citizens and some students from Al-Azhar."

On the same day of this rally, the students of the government school of Ras Al-Tin declared a strike.

Although the actions on the part of the students of the secondary and preparatory schools and Al-Azhar essentially represented the tail end of the strike, the event and its import continued to reverberate throughout the public domain. The national press waged a vituperative campaign against what it referred to as the repressive measures taken by the Ministry of Education. Indeed, it was the theme of several successive *Al-Ahram* editorials.

No matter how hard *Al-Ahram* might have tried to deny the political nature of the student movement, it was only a question of time before Egyptian students would demand a more active say in the affairs of their nation.

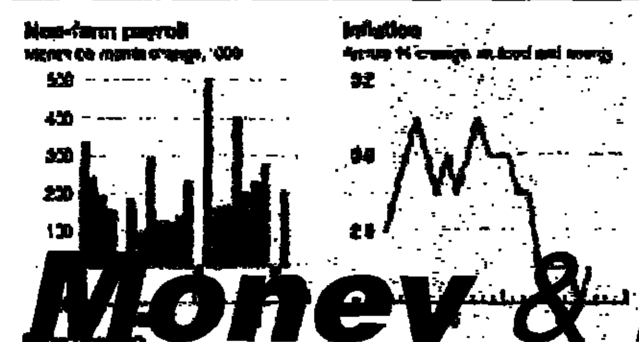
The author is a professor of history and head of Al-Ahram History Studies Centre.

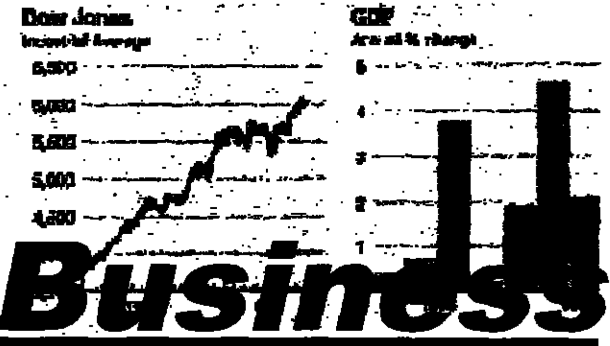


Delegation visits 6th of October City

AT THE invitation of the 6th of October Investors Association, a delegation of investment experts and university professors visited a number of projects located in the city to examine the difficulties they are facing.

Hamdi Abdel-Azim, dean of Sadat Academy in Tanta, explained that the delegation's visit comes after the great success met by the academy after convening a number of conferences and symposiums to debate the effects of a law which will safeguard and promote investment in Egypt.





Money & Business

Sales tax head awarded honourary doctorate

THE BOARD of the Egyptian General Finance and Tax Association, in a meeting held last week, decided to bestow on Mr. Mahmoud Mohamed Ali, head of the Sales Tax Department, a special honourary fellowship and doctorate, in recognition of his outstanding role in implementing the economic reform programme, and for his extraordinary efforts in resolving the obstacles and problems faced by the department. Rizk Ahmed Rizk, member of the board of the association, presented Ali with the honourary fellowship and doctorate.

Egyptian-German environmental protection

PROTECTION of the environment and improvement of the management of natural resources have been for two decades an important feature of Germany's cooperation with developing countries. Environmental impact assessments have been performed in the past for all projects.

Recently, Egypt's increased emphasis has been given to promoting environmental protection. Environmental protection was selected as one of five key areas between the German and Egyptian governments in 1994. The large majority of the projects funded by Germany in the area of environmental protection falls under 'financial cooperation'. These projects are administered by Kreditanstalt fuer Wiederaufbau (KfW), the German government's development bank.

The reason for the increased emphasis on promoting environmental protection is obvious: on the one hand, Egypt's natural resources in terms of water and cultivable/inhabitable land are quite limited. On the other hand, the natural environment is undergoing a severe degradation, ranging from pollution of the Nile River, soil degradation in agriculture, to high levels of air pollution in the industrial and urban centres. Pressure being exerted on the limited natural resources can be expected to increase as the population continues to grow and economic growth is expected to accelerate.

In addition, the Egyptian government itself has recently taken some decisive steps towards increased environmental protection by passing a new environmental law with its executive regulations as well as by strengthening the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Authority as a body for policy making, coordination and enforcement.

The main areas in which Germany is supporting environmental protection in Egypt are:

"Improvements in the area of agricultural irrigation and drainage through the support of two major schemes of the Ministry of Public Works and Water Resources.

Improvements of domestic water supply and treatment of sanitary sewage. A major project is currently being implemented in the governorate of Kafr El-Sheikh. Additional further projects are currently being investigated in Alexandria and in Qena Governorate.

Rehabilitation of selected 'black spots' (i.e. severe environmental hazards) of the Egyptian public sector industry. One project in the area that is just being completed is the rehabilitation of Misr Chemical Industries' chlorine plant in Alexandria. A similar scheme for another public sector company is expected to be launched in 1997.

Environmental protection in the power generation sector. A soft loan of DM30 million has just been granted by the German government for a programme of small- to medium-sized measures at thermal power stations that will increase both their effectiveness and at the same time reduce pollutant emissions.

Two major projects have been initiated in the area of renewable energies: a wind park in Zafarana on the coast of the Red Sea and a hydro-power plant at Naga Hammadi in Upper Egypt.

In addition to these projects, two programmes were launched in 1995 and 1996 respectively that addresses the issue of industrial pollution.

Roughly two years ago, a programme was launched by KfW on behalf of the German government for the Egyptian private industry. It has two purposes:

1. To promote new investment in the private industrial sector.

2. To promote environmental protection and industrial safety measures.

For this project, a loan of DM49 million and grants of DM15 million were made available. The funds for this programme are available through the three leading private commercial banks in Egypt: Misr International Bank (MIBank), Commercial International Bank (CIB) and Egyptian American Bank (EAB). Application for funding of any industrial project, including extensions and modernisation, can be made to any of the three banks.

Programme for environmental protection in the public sector

A large part of the industrial pollution in Egypt is caused by the public sector. Therefore, another financing scheme has just been launched to address this problem as well. In both, there are a number of similarities as well as differences in the scheme in comparison to the programme of funding for the private sector. The volume of funding for this programme is DM106 million. This consists of:

— DM50 million grant from the German government.

— The equivalent of DM50 million from 5 local banks as commercial loans.

— DM6 million in the form of a German grant for studies and support.

This programme is targeted especially to environmental measures in the public sector, both end-of-pipe investments and pollution prevention measures. Compared to the programme for the private sector, it does not cover financing of new production capacities. Also it is currently limited to the area of waste water reduction and treatment.

On the technical level, this programme is implemented in cooperation with the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA), which will assist in identification and selection of the individual enterprises and plants to receive financing. On the financial side, the programme is implemented by 5 banks, namely the National Bank of Egypt, Banque Misr, MIBank, EAB and CIB. They will on one hand channel the German grant to companies and on the other hand equal the same amount in commercial loans from their own resources.

In order to speed up implementation, a consultant has already pre-screened around 100 plants in the public sector industry in order to identify priority areas and generate applications for this programme.

Job prospects and retailing opportunities for the future

A MAJOR company operating in the field of building and construction is giving a boost to youths seeking job opportunities in the retail marketing or administrative fields, providing them with an excellent position where they can move up the ladder of success in a field that usually has limited entry-level opportunities. Eng. Yasser Fathi Amara, chairman of the board of United Construction and Building Co, said that the green light has been given to begin construction of the Lulu Al-Firdaus Commercial Centre, to be one of the largest commercial centres in Egypt. The project will be situated near one of the new residential communities that has sprung up as a result of the resolution passed by Cairo Governor Omar Abdel-Akher, Law 97/1997, concerning the planning and use of the land situated between kilometre 22.2 and 25 on the Cairo-Ismailia Highway.

Dr Tarek El-Tahawi, marketing consultant for the company, said that Lulu Al-Firdaus will offer numerous advantages and opportunities, especially since it will be situated near upscale residencies in the heart of the new city.

The commercial centre is to be located in front of the Atlas I buildings in Al-Nahda City, whose large community association reports that the volume of their needs in the area require numerous consumer and service projects, for the area still lacks stores. With that, good news is being heralded for the future, for owners of shops in Lulu Al-Firdaus Commercial Centre can expect a brisk economic movement to take place. The commercial centre will be built on a parcel of land measuring 11,100 sq m, over 2.5 feddans. Of this, 30 per cent will be used for the commercial centre itself, comprising of 3 floors for shops and 2 floors for administrative purposes. The stores there will feature a wide variety of the latest and most innovative goods and services, all at competitive prices.

Egypt's eight-goal walkover

Egypt scored a record eight goals against Ethiopia to qualify for the African Nations' Cup in Burkina Faso next year. Abeer Anwar reports

Last Sunday was make or break day for Egypt's fortunes in next year's African Nations Cup. Not only did the national team need to beat Ethiopia by a three-goal difference in Alexandria, but they also needed Morocco to beat Senegal in a match played simultaneously. If either of these had not happened, it would have been the end for Egypt's African Nations Cup hopes.

As it was, Egypt set a new African record by becoming the first team to score eight goals in an African Cup qualifier, and anxious managers following the Senegal-Morocco game on mobile phones were delighted to learn of a Moroccan victory, thus allowing Egypt to qualify for the African Nations Cup finals in Burkina Faso in 1988.

"Our victory wouldn't have made any difference if Senegal had beaten Morocco," commented a delighted Samir Adli, the national team's adminstrator, on hearing the news of Morocco's win.

This was the last match the team had to play away from its home ground at the Cairo Stadium. The Confederation of African Football (CAF) had banned Egypt from playing at the national stadium as punishment for the bad behaviour of players and fans after the national team's first-leg match with Morocco, in which Egypt drew 1-1.

The national team went into the game in a determined state of mind, egged on by the Ethiopian coach's predictions that "we are going to win because while the Egyptians will be playing under stress, hoping to qualify, we have no hope of qualifying, so our sole aim is to kick Egypt out."

Egypt's resolve never faltered. The players knew they needed a three-goal margin and they wasted no time in getting on with the job. Coach El-Gohari had planned that Egypt should unsettle the Ethiopians by penetrating their defence with strong, quick attacks. To this end he put the nation's best attackers on the field: Hazem Emam (who returned from Italy for the game), Hadi Khashaba, Abdel-Satar Sabri and Hossam Hassan, back after a spell of suspension for his behaviour during the Egypt-Morocco match.

Hadi Khashaba triggered the avalanche by converting a penalty just 120 seconds into the opening half. He was followed by Hesham Henfi's goal in the fifth minute. Then it was time for Hazem Emam to begin his star turn. Again and again he attacked the goal, scoring three times within 20 minutes in the 23rd, 37th and 45th minute. His hat-trick left Egypt with a 5-0 lead at the end of the first half.

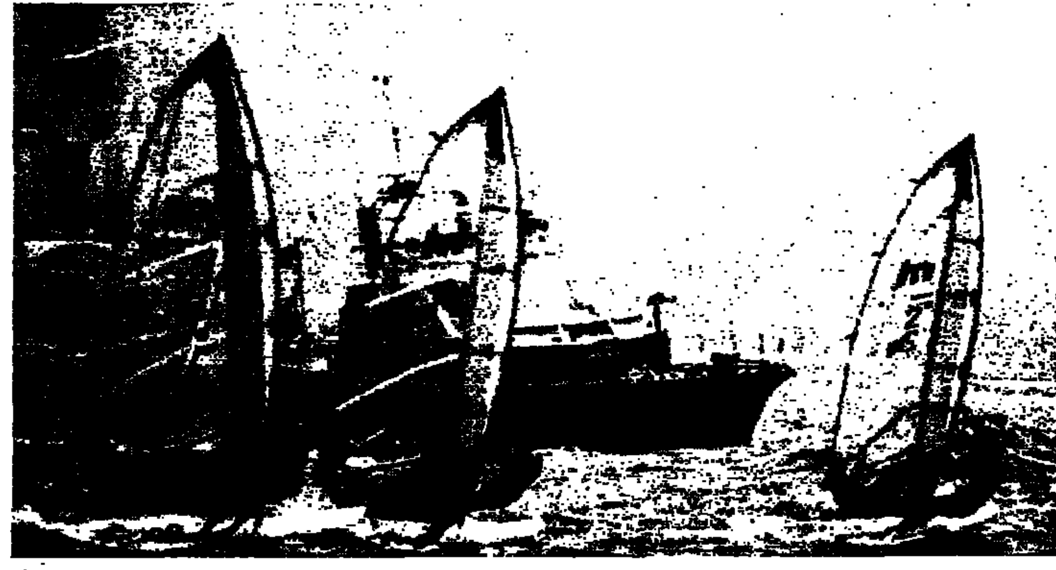
Hossam Hassan scored the sixth goal with a header in the seventh minute of the second half. Then — at last — it was Ethiopia's turn. The Ethiopians scored their first and only goal in the 14th minute of the second half from a penalty awarded when Egyptian goalkeeper Nader El-Sayed felled an Ethiopian player. But Egypt was soon back on track. Ahmed Hassan, wearing number seven, shot Egypt's seventh goal just three minutes after Ethiopia's goal. The eighth and final goal was scored by Magdi El-Sayed in the 32th minute.

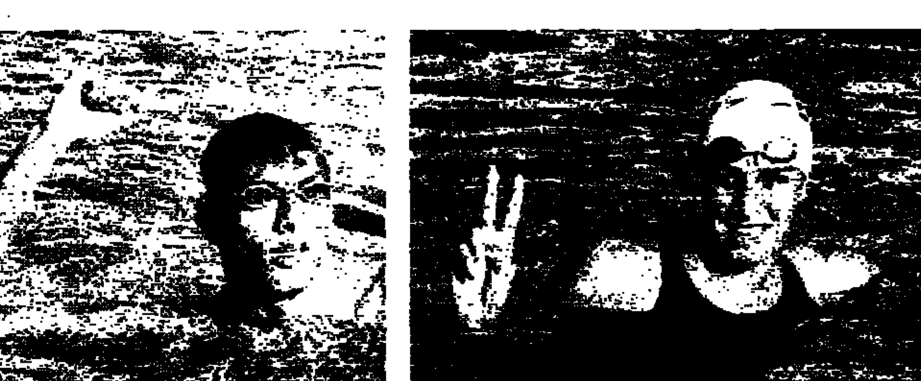
Pride at this amazing victory soon turned to celebration as news came through that Morocco had beaten Senegal 3-0, allowing Egypt to qualify for the African Nations Cup. Morocco finished the qualifications at the top of Group Three with 14 points, Egypt was second with nine points, Senegal finished with eight points and Ethiopia trailed with only one point.

Teams which have qualified from other groups are as follows: Group One — Ghana and Angola; Group Two — Côte d'Ivoire and Algeria; Group Three: Morocco and Egypt, in Group Four: Tunisia and Guinea; Group Five: Cameroon and Namibia; Group Six: Togo and DR Congo; Group Seven — Zambia and Mozambique. Hosts Burkina Faso and holders South Africa qualify automatically.

The draw for the championship will be held on 25 September, and the competition will take place between 7-28 February in Bobo-Dioulasso.







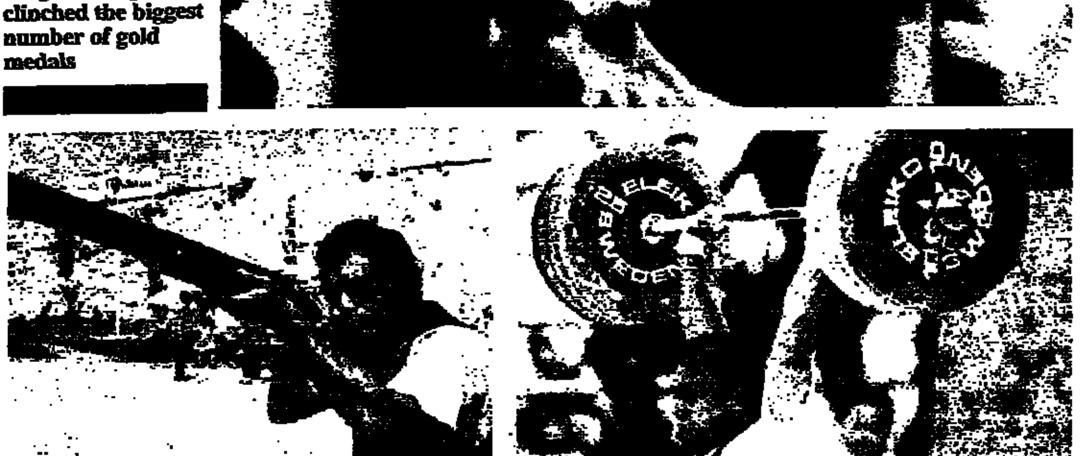
Record medals less four



Egypt's dominance of the eighth Pan-Arab Games was marred by five positive drugs tests from Egyptian gold medalists. Inas Mazhar reports from Beirut



Despite everything, Egyptian athletes dominated the Pan-Arab Games, maintaining their reign on the Arab throne. Swimming and weight-lifting clinched the biggest number of gold medals



Celebrations of Egypt's record-breaking 193 medals at the Pan-Arab Games in Beirut turned sour when it emerged that another four of the nation's gold medalists had failed drugs tests. Basil El-Gharabawi, winner of the over-95kg judo event had previously been stripped of his gold medal because tests showed he had used performance-enhancing drugs.

The four were Adel Mohamed Hassanein, gold medalist in tae kwon do, Hani Meselhi of the Egyptian volleyball team, Magdi Mahmoud Ahmed and Mohamed El-Maghawri — both gold medalists in Graeco-Roman wrestling.

Abdallah Ali Seif of Saudi Arabia, winner of the over 108kg weightlifting event, also tested positive. Syrian basketballer Anwar Abdel-Hai refused to undergo a drugs test, and was therefore considered to have given a positive result.

All these athletes were stripped of their gold medals.

The Egyptian Olympic Committee has protested the decision on the grounds that all the Egyptian athletes had taken drugs tests in Egypt, which had come out negative. Egypt, along with other countries whose athletes tested positive, has demanded re-tests, claiming that fizzy drinks and medicines could be responsible for the initial positive results.

But the president of Saudi Arabia's Olympic committee, Prince Faisal Bin Fahd, has expressed his admiration of the hardline stance of the Pan-Arab Games organisers. He argued that the application of international regulations on drugs would ensure a better future for Arab sports.

Drugs scandals were not the only cloud hanging over the closing moments of the Beirut Games. There was crowd trouble at the final of the soccer event on Sunday between Jordan and Syria. Syrian fans, already incensed by the sending-off of striker Nader Jokhadar in the 43th minute, threw bottles onto the pitch and ripped up seats when Georges Tadros scored to give Jordan a 1-0 victory. Lebanese referee Nabil Ayyad was forced to stop play for several minutes while police restored order.

Sad though they are, these events should not be allowed to detract from the many positive aspects of the competition, and of Egypt's performance. By the end of the Games, Egypt had 97 gold medals. This figure takes account of the stripping of Basil El-Gharabawi's medal, but still includes the golds of the other four Egyptians who tested positive. The final number of Egyptian gold medals should therefore stand at 93. Algeria are second on the medal table with 43 golds, Morocco has 19 and Syria has 16.

Egypt broke the record for the highest number of medals and gold medals in the Pan-Arab Games. And Egyptian ace swimmer Rania Elwani made another new record when she collected 11 medals — nine gold and two silver. The previous record, made in the Syrian Games in 1992 by Morocco's Nozha Bedwani in track and field events, stood at eight gold medals. Elwani was named the top athlete and super star of the Beirut Games.

The next Pan-Arab Games will be in Jordan in 1999.

Ahli go full steam ahead

As the football league enters its 28th week, Zamalek, put off their stride by their loss to Ahli, can't seem to pick themselves up, and Ahli prepare themselves for yet another victory. Eman Abdel-Moeti reports

Despite Zamalek's initial surge ahead of arch-rivals Ahli in this year's league, it's looking more and more likely, as the competition draws to a close, that — once again — Ahli are going to find themselves at the top of the table.

The biggest obstacle standing between Ahli and the trophy was the match against Zamalek in the league's 27th week. However, Ahli's 3-1 victory put the team securely ahead. After the Ahli-Zamalek match, Ahli went on to beat Al-Marrikh 2-1 in another spectacular match. Now, in the league's 28th week, Ahli has 63 points. Zamalek is second with 59.

Meanwhile, the repercussions of Zamalek's defeat at the hands of Ahli continued to reverberate into the 28th week of the league. Lack of confidence revealed itself in the team's performance against Al-Masri. Zamalek couldn't clinch what should have been an easy victory and three easy points; instead the match ended in a 1-1 draw, to Al-Masri's delight and Zamalek's devastation.

Football experts agree that it is Ahli's fighting spirit and positive attitude — characterising its performance from the beginning of the league until the very end of it — that has been the secret of their success. Ahli coach Rainer Holman said that if his team had given up when they were 11 points behind Zamalek they would never have reached the position they find themselves in today.

Meanwhile Zamalek's morale seems to sink ever lower. After four years of failure to win either the league or the cup, it is understandable that the players are demoralised. Morale has been further lowered by the lack of stability brought about by eight changes in the club's board over a period of four years. But it's a vicious circle — fans, at the end of their tether as another league defeat looms, are once again blaming board members and demanding their resignation.

According to Zamalek's Ismail Youssef, his team surpasses Ahli in skills and tactics. He believes it is only the upset of frequent changes in management which have disrupted the players and kept them on a losing streak.

With four points currently separating Zamalek and Ahli, Zamalek coach Farouk El-Sayed is determined to remain optimistic. Both teams have two more matches to play before the end of the league, so, he insists, all is not lost. Meanwhile, Rainer Holman cautioned his team not to relax or underestimate the effort needed for their remaining two matches against Gumhuriet Shebin and Al-Baladia.

As Ahli and Zamalek jostle for top position, the struggle is just as fierce lower down the premier league. In the 28th week, Mansoura, who have fought viciously this season to maintain their position, have managed to hold on to third place with 46 points. Ismaili are in fourth place with 43 points, followed by Ittihad Othman with 39. Ittihad (Alexandria), with 37 points, have proved that they deserve a place among the top six. The rest of the 16 teams in the premier league are battling to retain their place in the league. Aluminium, at the bottom of the table with a mere 22 points, look likely to face relegation.

Al-Ahram Weekly

Yvette Farazli: Tome travel

Walk through the door, into a bit of Paris. There she is, by the window



photo: Randa Shaath

The year was 1947. Yvette was twenty-something at the time. She knew by then that she did not want a traditional life: a husband, children and all the trappings that go with the territory. She wanted independence, the freedom to do as she pleased. Work, as in being employed, did not suit her either. There were too many strings attached. She loved travelling, walking the streets in strange cities, and filling her eyes with new sights, her nose with unusual smells. With a regular job, she would have had to apply for a holiday, not just up and go. She would have had to come back on time. Definitely not for her, she decided. She realised, however, that real freedom necessarily required an independent source of income.

Her family was originally from Lebanon, but now well established in Egypt. Like many others of their social standing, its members were all steeped in French culture. On one of her trips to France, she consulted an uncle who resided in Paris. Settle here and open a bookshop, he suggested. The war had just ended and Paris in those days was not as comfortable as Cairo. Yvette had been used to servants. What kind of freedom would it be that required her to cook and do housework on a regular basis? Yvette loved to visit Paris, but she certainly had no desire to live there. Back in Egypt, the idea of having a bookshop took root, however. Why should she start all over in Paris? She could open it right here, where she lived in comfort.

French was the chosen language of the Lebanese community. They sent their sons to Jesuit schools and their daughters to Catholic convents. Yvette was a graduate of the Sacre Coeur and considered French her first language. French was also the cultural language of upper-class Egypt, spoken by the elite.

In 1904, with the signature of the Entente Cordiale, France had renounced political claims on Egypt. Developing its cultural influence was its only means of pursuing its colonialist aims. French schools, religious and secular, had multiplied all over Egypt after 1882. Egyptians encouraged the French presence as a way of combating British hegemony, and Francophone cultural life flourished. Educated Egyptians spoke French rather than English and many Egyptians knew Paris's streets, if only through their readings, better than Cairo's.

Cairo, on the other hand was teeming with activity. Right after the war, a cosmopolitan society was intent on living life to the full. The most elegant women in the world shopped on Qasr El-Nil Street, where small, exclusive boutiques displayed the latest in French fashion, down to the smallest accessories. The elite was mad about French clothes, French perfumes and French literature. Young men wooed reluctant beauties with breathlessly romantic recitations of Alfred de Musset's verses. Schoolchildren learned that Descartes represented the epitome of French logic, the only kind worth acquiring, and French nannies took their charges to the Gezira Club's playground, which resounded with voices reminiscent only of those heard in the Parc Monceau.

"There was also the Jewish community," says Yvette. "Its members were very intellectual and read a lot. Strictly in French. They were to become my best clients by far." The competition, however, was ferocious. "There were eight libraries selling French books in downtown Cairo alone, and Hachette, the prestigious French publishing house and the accredited wholesale dealer of French books, played them off against each other, while some bookshop owners attempted to establish a monopoly for themselves."

At first, Yvette was blissfully unaware that she was entering such a competitive field. Nor did she know that the project she was launching, basically with the intent of earning extra pocket money, would become a landmark in the intellectual history of Egypt, that her bookshop would come to symbolise the artistic and literary influence France was to have on several generations of young Egyptians.

The idea of having a bookshop simply appealed to her more than having a prêt-à-porter shop, for instance, and she just went ahead with the plan. A bookshop at the corner of Qasr El-Nil and Sherif Street was up for sale. It sold English books, and was not doing very well. She acquired a partner and, with LE6,000 of her own money, took it over. Le Livre de France was thus born in the most elegant part of downtown Cairo. "I threw the English books away, nobody wanted to buy them," she says with a smile, aware that many of the books she displays on her shelves these days are in English.

She went to France and ordered school books from Hachette. "I borrowed money to pay for these books. I did not know, then, all the tricks of the trade and I wanted the books ready for *la rentrée*, the first day of school." On her return, she found out that Hachette had sold the same books earlier to their usual dealer in Cairo, who had already distributed them to the schools. She only managed to unload her consignment the following year. "For a year I was badly in debt and had to go crying to my mother who had to bail me out. But I learned," she says.

But she did not forget the reason why she had gone into business in the first place: she wanted to be able to pay for her travels and her tastes, which were by no means modest. She liked all the beautiful things in life: art and old books, good food and antiques — "and I also liked gambling," she adds. These days she plays backgammon and bridge, "but always for money, even if it is only a little..." And, says Zeina, a relative and her assistant, "she hates losing. Yesterday she woke me up to tell me that she had won LE50! She was so happy, she had trouble sleeping."

Yvette was spending her profits from the shop. Her partner objected. "He was a millionaire," she says. "He thought that sound business practice was to reinvest the profits in the shop. He did not need the money. I did. I only took LE900 for myself in four years. He said that I was crazy. We parted company."

Striking out alone did not bother her unduly. Business was booming. Taha Hussein, then minister of culture, had helped her obtain the coveted monopoly on school books. She was travelling frequently to Paris and had learned to be selective in her purchases. She was now well organised and used a credit system to pay for her orders. Her sister came to help her with the shop, which was constantly full of clients, some of them habitués like Tewfik El-Hakim, who stopped by every Friday. They browsed, bought books by the armload and met their friends there. It was like a crowded salon. There was nowhere to sit, though, so people just stood, or slowly walked around the large table, creaking under the weight of too many books, which still occupies the centre and most of the floor surface of the shop.

She never bothered to change the way things are arranged, except for the raised oval alcove at the far end, which she added one year when she had some extra money and where the large art books can be found now. People who have frequented the bookshop for years have never noticed any attempt at artistically-arranged displays. The table in the centre has always been piled as high as it is today with the latest titles, while the shelves all around have always seemed about to burst, on the verge of overflowing with hundreds of tightly-packed volumes. Yvette, who sits at the same small desk she acquired in 1947, stacked with orders, bills, books waiting for a place on the shelves, magazines, and a telephone lost among the pages, looks around and smiles. "We are celebrating our fiftieth anniversary this year. That makes an awful number of books, you know, and I don't get rid of anything. There are thousands of books in the basement, and as many in the attic..."

In 1952, on Black Saturday, Qasr El-Nil Street went up in flames. Le Livre de France was not spared, "but books don't burn," says Yvette. The damage came from the water that was poured over everything to extinguish the fire. She lost less than she could have, she says, but still, she had to account for the damage. She started again, undeterred. Between then and 1956, she had practically no competition. As foreigners liquidated their assets, many of the other bookshops were placed under her management by the government and after 1956 she was the only one left in the business.

When travel was restricted in the '60s, she went to Paris several times a year to buy books with the permission of the Ministry of Culture, and to Beirut where her sister was now residing. French culture was now dispensed only through Le Livre de France. Many of the books she had kept in store were in demand, as were the newer publications. The few bookshops which carried English books were going out of business as their owners, many of them Jews, left the country. Yvette put a few English titles on display and, when her attempt proved successful, she slowly increased her stock.

In the '70s she tried her hand at publishing. Her first publication, EW Lane's *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, was reprinted three times. Other successful titles were the *Thousand and One Nights* and *La Decade Egyptienne*. It is a risky business, she says, but she has been lucky in her choices so far and she is looking for other works that have wide appeal. Fifty years on, does she have any regrets? Yvette thinks for a while. "Yes," she says finally. "I am sorry I can no longer walk the streets of Paris for hours."

Profile by ***Fayza Hassan***

Pack of Cards

by Madame Sosostris

♣ Hello, my lovelies, I am back from Paris, and guess what I was doing there. First things first, as we Francophones say, and first on my list were the Autumn/Winter **Christian Dior** collections. As I was telling my friend, *Dior representative in Egypt* **Brigitte Lefebvre**, I was thrilled that the lovely **John Galliano**, who was personally responsible for the gypsy look with which I recently conquered Cairo, and is keeping the **Dior** tradition going, had his models up to their necks in Orientalism. There was my personal favourite, **Mata Hari**, in her role as a dancer and courtisane — nothing as vulgar as as a spy, of course—and **Sarah Bernhardt** slinking up and down the catwalk, decked out in turn-of-the-century laces, plumes and painted silks studded with diamonds. They reminded me so of myself in Paris, when I was a muse to several famous poets and painters. And let me tell you, the new *corsets* will give anyone the oh-so-feminine bee waist that no amount of dieting can ever produce.



♠ How can I describe my arrival at the large celebration marking the 23 July revolution, in Paris? The stunned look on the guests' faces when I made my entrance, casually draped from head to toe in antique Persian silk scarves, added yet another feather to my headdress. Incidentally, I would like you to know that mine is the real thing, a period piece — and not a more or less accurate historic interpretation — something I have kept from my salad days in gay Paris. My dear friend **George Bahgory** got his pad and pencil out and immediately immortalised my *toilette*. Only when he had finished was I allowed to mingle with the numerous friends come to celebrate the anniversary of our revolution. All the Parisian Egyptians were there and all I could do was wave to my friend **Boutros Ghali** who had so many friends around that he would have missed me, had the white plume on my little hat not been such a pole of attraction.



clockwise: 23 July celebrations; Dior, this winter; Hussein Fahmi at Le Meridien, Heliopolis; Mona and Hisham

♥ And now here I am, dears, among you once more, and just in time to attend the wedding of our own **Mona El-Nahhas**. The lucky groom is **Hisham Farouk**, an army major in the artillery corps. The reception took place at **Hisham**'s corps club in Nasr City. My best wishes to the young couple. May they flourish in all the happiness they deserve.

♦ Fashion is my specialty, as you know by now, and it came as no surprise when I was invited to make my personal contribution to that glittering world. **Hussein Ghaleb**, general manager of Le Meridien Heliopolis, and sales and marketing director **Nasser Mukhtar**, overcame my initial reticence and persuaded me to bestow some of my creations on a fashion show held at the hotel. All my favourite local houses were there, but what really gave me palpitations was the appearance of the dashing guest of honour, **Hussein Fahmi**, the famous movie star.

